The role of "Sanatana Elements" in shaping the "Tamil Culture"

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Background:

On 2 September 2023, while addressing a conference in Tamil Nadu, Mr **Udayanidhi Stalin** the Minister of Sports who is also the son of Mr **MK Stalin** the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu State, made a statement "Just like dengue, mosquitoes, malaria, or corona-virus need to be eradicated, we have to eradicate ***Sanatana***". As it was given a very wide publicity by the Indian Media and in no time, it became the hot topic for discussion on the various political and social forums. In other words, Mr **Udayanidhi Stalin** has equated "**Sanatana Dharma**" to the **diseases** that get spread through viruses and hence he felt the need of its annihilation.

Meaning of the phrase "Sanatana Dharma"

Sanskrit word '**Sanatana**' means eternal or everlasting and the term '**Dharma**' manifests the path of righteousness.

Currently, the phrase **"Sanatana Dharma/सनातन धर्म "** is commonly used by some scholars to highlight an **age-old and traditional outlook of Hinduism**. As a matter of fact, **Sanatana Dharma / Hinduism** is the world's oldest, timeless and the most inclusive religion.

Although the Indian origin ancient **Sanskrit texts** like the Four Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishadas, Legends, Epics etc. are treated as the oldest known texts of **Sanatana Dharma** (Hindu Religion), but the term **Sanatana** is not found in **Four Vedas,** the earliest Hindu scriptures. In **Rigved**, the oldest among the four Vedas, the term **Dharma** does appear in some verses, but it has primarily been used to signify the upholding of the **Cosmic Order/Rta, the first principle of Vedic Ideology**. Present-day Hindu religious leaders often use the word **Dharma** to express and promote the social and moral values in the **Hindu Society**.

Tamil Culture

Generally speaking, the term **Culture** is defined as the customs and beliefs of a particular group of people at a particular time. It also covers the progress made by the different settled societies of a particular region in the fields of knowledge, arts, languages, and social norms/codes applicable within the same society. Moreover, it reflects attitude of a particular community towards the people of other faiths coexisting in the same area as well as the races/tribes living in other regions. In this way, **Culture** is closely related to day-to-day life of a man as it imparts him the regional and/or religious identity in the global world.

Tamil Culture indicates the culture of the people who speak **Tamil language**. Majority of the Tamil speaking people reside in the **Tamil Nadu state** of **Southern India** that has more than two thousand years *written history*. In the history, the homeland of **Tamil people** is known as "*Tamilakam*" and the people of Tamil Nadu take pride in their ***Dravidian culture***, which has its own distinct language, rich ancient literature, a unique style of architecture, art, and dance.

However, the basic question here is, "why did **Udayanidhi Stalin** use offensive words against the **Sanatana Dharma**?" To arrive at proper answer, we need to know the development that took place in the **Tamil Nadu region of India** before and after the Indian Independence.

After the victory over **Tipu Sultan** in the year **1799**, almost all **South India** came under the control of **East India Company**, and then early in the nineteenth century many **Christian Missionaries** from Europe opened their branches at the several places in **South India**.

In the year **1838**, a person named as **Robert Caldwell** (1814 –1891) who belonged to **London Missionary Society** landed in the erstwhile **Madras Presidency** to preach and propagate **Christian Faith** in **South India**. After spending some time in **Madras**, **Caldwell** realised that he had to be proficient in **Tamil** to convert the masses. Hence for the first three years, he studied **Tamil language** thoroughly and then learned the finer details of other South Indian Languages too. Based on in-depth analysis, he arrived at a point that the **South Indian languages** like **Tamil**, **Telugu**, **Kannada**, **Malayalam** and **Tulu** exhibit similarity in many ways, have independent literal history, but not directly related to **Sanskrit** and other **Indo-European Languages**. Therefore, he placed these South Indian languages in a separate category, and grouped them together as the **Dravidian Family of Languages**. He also observed that especially **Tamil language** has not borrowed its grammar from **Sanskrit** and hence termed it as the most ancient, pure, civilised and matured language of the **Dravidian Family**.

Having learned **Tamil** properly, **Caldwell** started his missionary work from **Tinnevelly** (now known as **Thirunelveli**) district in **Tamil Nadu** where he studied many palm leaf manuscripts and **Sangam literature** and conducted several excavations. There he wrote a book "A Political and General History of District of Tinnevelli in the Presidency of Madras" that mainly focuses on the social struggle of the very poor and downtrodden People of that district.

Caldwell spent about fifty years in **Tamil Nadu** and understood that unless and until the **Brahmanical Ideology** and **Idol Worship** are made main targets, the Missionaries cannot achieve their goal of converting a large number of **Tamil People** into the **Protestant Faith**. By constantly raising the issues like independent ancient language, distinct material and

philosophical culture, and more than two thousand years old history of the **Native Tamil People** through his talks and writings, **Caldwell** was successful in creating a rift between the **Common Tamil People** and the **Tamil Brahmins**. **Caldwell** also observed that the majority of **Tamil Hindus** are emotionally attached to the **rituals** and not to the **religious leaders** as the **Brahmins** lived separately and did not want to mix with others. He argued that **coming together on the occasion of a ritual alone** does not do service to mankind/society.

That is way, some social scientists say that, in true sense, in the late nineteenth century, **Bishop Robert Caldwell** provided the **theoretical framework** for the **Movement against the Tamil Brahmins** that was actually initialized in the second decade of twentieth century by the **three non-Brahmin Tamil Leaders** (**Mudaliar**, **Chetty** and **Nair** who were the educated landlords, founded the **Justice Party** in the year **1916** mainly to criticise the dominance of the **Tamil Brahmin community** in the field of **education** and **government jobs**, but expressed their loyalty to the **British Raj** as these leaders intentionally did not join **freedom movement**).

Since ancient time, the **Brahmins** have been treating themselves as the custodian of the ***Sanatana Dharma*** and the old **Hindu Scriptures**, **Epics**, **Legends** etc. have been composed in ***Sanskrit*** Language, and hence the present-day **Tamil Politicians** frequently target both of them as **Bishop Robert Caldwell** in his book "**A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages (1856)**" has deliberately called the **Tamil Speaking People** as the **Dravidians** who are described to be **culturally** and **linguistically** different from the **North-Indian Aryas** and thus cleverly laid the foundation for **their separate identity**.

In the last hundred years, **Tamil Nadu Politics** has moved from the **anti-Brahmin** to **Dravida Nadu** to **anti-Hindi campaign** mainly to flare up the emotions of the ordinary people.

The objective of the present essay is to bring out the facts that are generally neglected by the **Eminent Historians** and **Political Commentators** due to their pre-conceived notions as they show **selectivity** in highlighting the points that suit to their line of thinking. Basically, this essay is an attempt to present the **"Two thousand years old Tamil Culture in Totality**".

Important "Elements of Sanatana Dharma" discussed in the present Essay are as follows.

- **Sanatana Characters and Features noticed in the Ancient Tamil Literature.**
- **Epical Stories and Puranic Tales depicted in the Temple Architectures.**
- **Sanskrit- the language used in inscription and composition of the Literature.**
- **Brahmins- the contributors and promoters of Tamil (South Indian) Culture.**

I. "Sanatana Features" found in the Early Tamil Literature:

The Earliest Tamil Literature consists of several anthologies composed in the ancient **Tamil language** and it is said that most of them were composed during the period **3rd century BCE to 3rd century CE**. Some anthologies provide minute details of the every day's life of a **common man** lived in that era which is generally missing in the **ancient Sanskrit texts**. The old literature reflects cultural and philosophical progress made by the **ancient Tamil Society**. The learned people of that period have shared their ideas, thoughts and experiences in the form of Poems using the spoken words (language) as the medium of expression, as in those days, the Poetic Speech was relatively easy to compose, recollect and pass down by word of mouth.

For the ease of understanding, the **Early Tamil Literature** [**1**] has been divided into four categories as: **1**. **Sangam Literature**; **2**. **Tolkappium** (Tamil Grammar); **3**. **Tirukural**; and **4**. **The Five Great Epics**. As our main purpose of reading the **ancient Tamil documents** is to identify the **Sanatana Features** in them, and hence we will scrutinize these four classes of literature mainly to locate **Sanatana Aspects** hidden in them and then discuss the same in **brief.**

A. Sangam Literature:

The literal meaning of the word "**Sangam**" is "**assembly**" or "**meeting**". In the context of "**Tamil Sangam**", it refers to a gathering of many Tamil Poets and Scholars occurred over a very long period of time which is believed to have taken place from around 300 BCE to 300 CE. **Sangam literature** is generally considered as the oldest records of **Tamil literature** and legends. It is believed by many that the Poems composed by the generations of Poets belonging to different strata of the ancient Tamil Society frequently met in **Madurai** town belonged to **Pandya country** as it was the important cultural and religious centre at that time.

The **Sangam literature** is commonly categorized into two groups: the **Ettuttogai**, which is a collection of anthologies consisting of **eight shorter poems**; and the **Pattuppattu**, which is an anthology of **ten long p**oems.

The Poems deal with a wide range of topics such as love, war, heroism, ethics, and philosophy. However, for practical purpose, these poems are sub-divided into two major themes as **a. Akam** (*inner world*) themes, mainly focusing on personal emotions and love, and **b. Puram** (*outer world*) themes, emphasizing heroism, ethics, and social values.

Sangam Literature also provides the valuable insights into the political, social, economic, and cultural life of the people lived in the **ancient Tamil country**. Descriptions of the battles fought between the **Early Cholas** and **Pandyas** illustrate the heroic deeds of the kings of that time. The Poem **Purananuru** presents a historical record of the warriors who fought for **Pandya**, **Chola** and **Chera** kings.

The language used in composition of the **Sangam Poems** is termed as **Old Tamil**, and it has a different grammar and vocabulary compared to **Modern Tamil**.

As mentioned earlier, the **Sangam Literature** is divided into two major groups, namely;

a. **Ettutogai,** and **b**. **Pattuppattu** and we shall discuss both of them separately.

a. Ettutogai (Eight Anthologies):

It consists of collection of Short **2,371** Poems varying from small stanzas of three lines in **Ainkurnuru** to stanzas of **forty lines in Purananuru**. The **Eight Anthologies** are identified as; **Aingurununuru, Narrinai, Aganaooru, Purananuru, Kuruntogai, Kalittogai, Paripadal** and **Padirruppatu**.

b. Pattuppattu (Ten Idylls):

It consists of collection of Long Poems in ten different sections, called as **Thirumurugarruppadai, Porunararruppadai, Sirupanarruppadai, Perumpanarruppadai, Mullaippattu, Nedunalvadai, Maduraikkanji, Kurinjippatttu, Pattinappalai** and **Malaipadukadam.**

a. Sanatana features observed in "Ettutogai/ Eight Anthologies/books":

1. Ainkurununuru: About **500 poems** of this book come under the **akam** (love and emotions) category of the Sangam literature, contains relatively few words taken from **Sanskrit**. There is a mention of the **kutumi**, or the "**pigtail of Brahmin boys**" in one of the poem.

2. Narrinai: Around **400 poems** of this class contain both **akam** (love) and **puram** (war, public life) category of poems. Poems are credited to 175 ancient poets, and contain a few **Sanskrit** words.

3. Akananuru*:* It is a collection of **400 akam/love poems** with invocatory poem dedicated to **Perumal/Vishnu**. Poems 69, 281 and 375 mention the **Maurya Empire**, and poems 251 and 265 refer to the **Nandas**, a number of poems echo the **Hindu puranic characters** like **Parasurama**, **Rama**, **Krishna** and others. **The Akananuru has a reference to the Ramayana in poem-70**. The poem places a triumphant **Rama at Dhanushkodi**, sitting under a **Banyan tree**, involved in some secret discussions, when the birds are chirping away. **Perunthevanaar**, who translated the **Mahabharata** into **Tamil**, is one of the authors.

4. **Purananuru: 400 heroic Poems** of this class belong to genre **puram**/**war**/outer, and use words, phrases, and metaphors, including the references to the **Himalayas** of "immeasurable heights", invocation of **Shiva**, mention of **Vishnu**, the **four Vedas**, the **Ramayana.**

Some poems provide information on the political and social history of ancient **Tamil Land**. Reference of **Chera** king **Uthayan Cheralaathan** praising him for his feeding the armies at the **Kurukshetra** war. The earliest reference to **Ramayana** in **poem-378**, and a reference to **Maurya** in **poem-175**, which indicates a late date of about 2nd century BCE.

In **poem-367**, the poet **Avvaiyar** sings the glory of the king **Perunarkilli** who performed the great **Vedic ritual** called **Rajasuya Yajna** and compares him to the three main fire ritual performed by the **twice born Brahmins**.

The deity **Perumal** (***Vishnu***) is identified with **Mayon**, literally meaning, "**The dark-complexioned one**", who is also referred to in the texts **Purananuru** and **Pattupattu**.

A few lines of **Porunarattrupadai** refer to the **rebirth** and **Karma** theories, manifestation of the **Brahmanical ideology**.

5. Kuruntokai: The collection of **402 poems** belongs to the **akam** (love) category. The poems include some **Sanskrit** origin words.

6. Kalittokai: 150 poems of this section fall in the genre akam/ love and erotic, collection par excellence. Poems are notable for the relatively **higher number of Sanskrit origin words**, indirectly described some incidences from **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata**. **Shiva** invoked in **poem-1** and **2** who is praised by the **Brahmins** and the references of **Vedas**, the evil plans of

Duryodhana's to kill the **Pandava brothers** and then the future story, how they escape from the **Lakshagriha** described in **poem-25**. The battle of **Murugan** and **Surapadma** mentioned in **poem-27**. **Ravana** lifting the **Kailasha**, an event mentioned in the famous **Sanskrit** epic **Ramayana** is described in the Lines 33 to 37 of **Poem-139**. **Bhima** killing **Duryodhana** mentioned in **poem-52**, and the love stories of **Urvashi** and **Tilottama** hinted in **Poem-109**.

7. Paripatal: **70 poems** of this book exhibit an "**akam genre**", odd and hybrid collection which expresses love in the form of **religious devotion** (**Bhakti**) to the **gods** and **goddesses** predominantly to **Maha Vishnu** and **Murugan**. Out of 24 survived poems of **Paripatal,** seven are dedicated to **Maha-Vishnu**, eight to **Murugan** and nine to river **Vaigai**. The poems of **Vishnu** show his supremacy, and gives him the status **Para-Brahman**. In Tamil, **Tirumal** or **Perumal** means **Vishnu**. The poems also mention temples and shrines, thereby suggesting that the **Tamil people** had already built temples for **Vishnu and Murugan** in the **Sangam era**. The poems refer to **Puranic tales** like the **samudra manthan** (churning of cosmic ocean), the struggle of **Pralhada** the devotee of **Vishnu**, the legends **Shiva** and **Murugan/Kartikeya**.

8. Patirruppattu: It contains **86 puram** genre poems (war and public life). Originally contained ten sections of ten poems, each section dedicated to a decade of rule in ancient Kerala (Cerals, Chera). **Patirruppattu** was written by several poets mentioning the **Hindu deities** like **Vishnu, Shiva, Murugan and Korravai (the goddess of war)**.

b. Sanatana features in "Pattuppattu/ Ten Idylls" [1]:

1. Thirumurugarruppadai: The **Tirumurukā̲r̲ruppaṭai** is one of the long poems contains **317 verses** and many of them devoted to lord **Murugan** (also known as **Subrahmanya**, **Kumara**, **Skanda**, and **Kartikeya**). There is also mention of **Vishnu** and indirect reference of Goddess **Laxmi** at one place. Additionally, references of **Yajna**; **Indra**; **twice born persons** and lord **Murugan** specifically described as the son of **Mountain's daughter**/**Parvati**.

2. Porumpaṇarruppaṭai: In the cultural context, the poem mentions a ***yupa*** post (a form of Vedic altar) and a village in which **Brahmins recite Vedas**. Along with **Brahmins**, even their **parrots** are described to sing the **Vedic hymns**. Poem ***Porumpanarruppatai*** mentions **Maha Vishnu** as the god who is "**tall, dark-skinned"**. It also talks about the **Supreme God** (**Vishnu**) from whom "**the four-faced god was born**" (as per Puranas/ legends, god **Brahma** is born from **Vishnu's navel**). In short, the poem portrays **many Brahmanical Ideas**. The poem is also source of historical information about the ancient **Chola kingdom** and king **Karikala**.

3. Sirupanarruppatai: The **269 lines poem** implicitly describes **Bhima**, one of the **Pandavas** of the well-known ancient epic **Mahabharata**.

The Poem also lists out **three ancient Tamil kingdoms**, namely **Pandyas**, **Cholas** and **Cheras** having separate capitals; **Madurai** (the capital of Pandyas), **Uranthai** the capital of Cholas), and **Vanchi** (the capital of Cheras).

4. Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaṭai: In this poem, god **Vishnu** has been mentioned in **several verses** and presence of his temple in **Kanchipuram**. It also highlights lord **Vishnu** as the supreme god of the world and god **Brahma** was born from the **navel of Maha Vishnu**.

5. Mullaippāṭṭu: The poem contains **13 Sanskrit** words. It implicitly mentions **Vishnu** and **Laxmi**. Lines 46–47 of **Mullaippattu** signal **Brahmin yogis** in **Saffron-colour clothes** carrying three staves.

6. Nedunalvadai: 188 lines poem simply provides information on social and cultural life of the people lived during that period.

7. Maduraikkanji*:* The composer of this **583 line poem** has talked about the ancient city **Madurai** having **many temples** of lord **Murugan** in which men dance. **Vishnu** is described as the ruler of **three world and the protector**. There is a mention of **Rama** and **Krishna** as his incarnations. **Brahmins who live in Madurai city** chant **Veda-mantras** regularly. City gates have symbol of **Laxmi** the goddess of wealth. A **bathing festival** with ritual dip in the waters to "**cleanse their sins**" is also mentioned in the poem.

8. Kurinjippatttu: 261 lines poem contains **19 Sanskrit** origin words. There is a mention of the name of North Indian king, **Brihadatta**.

9. Pattinappalai: This poem brings out the fact that in the **Early Chola kingdom**, Hindu and Jain communities lived together in their places of worships or monasteries. In many lines of this poem, references of **Kaveripattanam** the city of **Early Chola kingdom** are noticed. There is also mention of **Mahalaxmi** painted on the walls and considered as the **goddess of wealth and fortune**. **Maha Vishnu** has been referred to in many verses. Worship of **Mayon** (**Vishnu**) in the form of Pillars or post is hinted here.

Reference of **Kaliyuga Varadaraja Perumal Temple** is a well-known example.

Teaching of Vedas and the material sourced from **Ganga/North Indian region** are some more special features of this poem.

10. Malaipadukadam: In this lengthy poem, **Maha Vishnu** has been denoted as the **Supreme Deity** and described to have worshipped by many saints and kings. Lord **Murugan** is described as the **God of War**. Reference of Goddess **Laxmi** is also seen at one place.

B.Tolkappiyam:

It is the ancient text of **Tamil Grammar** but closely connected to **Sangam Literature**. The **Tolkappiyam** is divided into three parts, ***Eluthu*** (phonology of Letters), ***Col*** (morphology of Words) and ***Porul*** (Matter or content of a poem) [1, 4].

Some say that as there is absence of the thoughts of **Buddhism** in **Tolkappiyam**, therefore, its earliest part would have been composed before the **Ashoka's period,** but during the **Early Sangam Period**.

Logically speaking, **Tolkappiyam** being the **grammar treatise**, a book on grammar of any language can be written only when there is **pre-existing literature** in that particular language. Then only the freshly written **Grammar Book** would serve as the guidelines for the future generation composers/writers.

Kamil Zvelebil [5] believes that the **author of Tolkappiyam** must be aware of grammar of **Sanskrit** and **Prakrit languages**. He further claims that the composer has borrowed some information from the **Sanskrit** texts like **Arthshastra of Kautilya** and **Natya-shastra of Bharatamuni**. Based on his in-depth study, he has termed **Tolkappiyam** as one of the **finest monuments of human intelligence**, the first literary expression of an **indigenous pre-Aryan South Indian civilization**, representing the essence and the summary of classical **Tamil culture**.

The names of Vedic Deities found in **Tolkappiyam** are; **Mayan** (**Visnu**), **Ceyem** (**Skanda**), **Ventan** (**Indra**) and **Varuna.**

Surprisingly, in the **Tolkappiyam** text, there is a mention of **eight types of the marriages** described in the old **Sanskrit** document called as "**Dharma-shastra**".

In **Tolkappiyam**, there is a reference of **four-fold division** of an ancient **Tamil society** (probably based on the **Northern Brahminical Ideas**) out of them, the three ***antanar*** (Brahmins), ***arasar*** (King), **vanigar** (Vaisyas) as ***irupirappalar*** (***dvijas*** or twice born) and they were entitle to wear the sacred thread (***punul***). It was based on the **major occupational work**.

C. Tirukural:

Tirukural or **Thirukkural** or simply called as the **Kural** in **Tamil**, literally means "a short verse". There are **1330 couplets** in total of seven words each that are arranged into 3 main sections and 133 chapters. Each chapter contains 10 couplets. In literally world, the **Tirukural** is considered as one of the **world's greatest philosophical masterpieces**. Some scholars call it as the **Universal Book of Principles**.

It is generally said that **Valluvar** (also known as **Thiruvalluvar**) is the creator of the **Kural** text. Although there is no unanimity among the scholars about its date, but based on the internal evidence, some **experts say that it would have been composed after Sangam age anytime from 300** to **500 CE**. Additionally, not much information is available about its author **Valluvar**. **Tirukular** is generally treated as the **post-Sangam literature**.

Out of the **1,330** verses/couplets present in the text, 40 numbers are related to god, rain, ascetics, and virtue; 340 on fundamental everyday virtues of an individual; 250 on royalty; 100 on the ministers of state; 220 on essential requirements of administration; 130 on social morality, both positive and negative; and 250 on human love and passion. Some of the couplets can be taken as the **Do's and Don'ts's** for the betterment of life.

As our main aim of going through the ancient **Tamil document** is to find out the **Sanatana Features hidden in them**, and after scanning all **1330 couplets of Tirukarul**, the following English Translated couplets have been selected that hint at the composer of the text had prior knowledge of **some Vedic or Legendary characters**. Please note that, to get better insight on the content of selected couplets/verses, the **two separate English translations** (of the **Tirukarul)** made by two different persons [6, 7] have been referred to.

Couplet-3 hints at Lotus sitting God or Creator possibly means 'Lord Brahma'

3. Malarmicai ēkiṉāṉ māṇ aṭi cērntār nilamicai nīṭu vāḻvār. (Tamil verse in Roman script)

3. Those who find refuge in the great feet (of Him) **who lives in the lotus of the heart** (of the devotee) live eternally in heaven [6].

3. The Supreme dwells within **the lotus of the heart**. Those who reach His Splendid Feet dwell enduringly within unearthly realms [7].

Couplet-25 indicates '*Vedic God Indra*'

25. Aintu avittāṉ ārṟal, akal vicumpuḷār kōmāṉ **intiraṉē** cālum, Kari. (Verse in Tamil)

25. **Indra**, the **Lord of the skies** is himself a witness, to the might of those who have conquered their five senses [6].

25. Such is the power of those who subdue the five senses, that even **Indra**, sovereign of spacious Heaven's celestials, suffered their curse [7].

Couplet-560 suggests 'Brahmin, Veda and Cow'

560. ā payaṉ kuṉṟum; aṟutoḻilōr nūl maṟappar; kāvalaṉ kāvāṉ eṉiṉ. (Verse in Tamil)

560. If the protecting monarch fails in his duties, the **yield of cows will diminish** and **Brahmans** with their **six duties will forget their Vedas [6]**.

560. If the people's protector fails to protect **Brahmins** will forget the **Vedas and cows'** milk will dry up [**7**].

Couplet-84 presents 'the Goddess of Fortune/ Laxmi'

84. Akaṉ amarntu ceyyāḷ uṟaiyum-mukaṉ amarntu nal viruntu ōmpuvāṉ il. (Verse in Tamil)

84. Fortune smiles on the house of one who entertains with cheerful face worthy guests [6].

84. Wealth's Goddess dwells in the hospitable home of those who host guests with a smiling face [7].

Couplet-179 signals 'the Goddess of Fortune/Laxmi'

179. Aṟaṉ aṟintu veṉkā aṟivu uṭaiyārc cērumtiṟaṉ aṟintu āṅkē tiru. (Verse in Tamil)

179. The wise who know what is righteous covet not; the **Goddess of Fortune** would seek them unbidden [6].

179. Just as wise men know the goodness of noncoveting, so **Fortune Herself knows their goodness** and draws near [7].

Couplet-617 sounds 'the Goddess of Fortune/Laxmi'

617. 'Maṭi uḷāḷ, mā mukaṭi' eṉpa; maṭi ilāṉ tāḷ uḷāḷ, tāmaraiyiṉāḷ. (Verse in Tamil)

617. Goddess of misfortune dwells in sloth; the **Goddess of fortune** lives in exertion [6].

617. They say the black ogress called Misfortune lurks in laziness, while **Goddess Fortune** lingers in the laboring toils of active men [7].

Couplet-610 manifests 'God Vishnu or Vamanavtar of Vishnu'

610. Maṭi ilā maṉṉavaṉ eytum-aṭi aḷantāṉ tāayatu ellām oruṅku. (Verse in Tamil)

610. All the **universe once measured by God** will be with the king of no sloth [6].

610. A king devoid of indolence will thereby procure all that cosmic expanse **measured by God's immeasurable strides [7].**

Couplet-1062 signals 'Lord Brahma as the Creator'

1062 irantum uyirvāḻtal vēṇṭiṉ parantu, keṭuka ulakiyaṟṟi yāṉ. (Verse in Tamil)

1062. May the **creator of the world** perish if he has ordained life only through mendicancy? [6]

1062. Were it the **World-Creator's** wish for men to live by begging, men might wish that He, too, die a wandering beggar [7]

Comment: Above seven selected couplets bring out the fact that the **Composer of Tirukural** was familiar with the **names of the Deities** and **their key attributes** mentioned in the **Legends created by the advocates of Sanatana Dharma**.

In sum, from the above references, it can be said that **the author of Thirukkural** was aware of some **Characters of Sanatana legends**.

D. Presence of 'Sanatana traits' in the two of the Five Great Epics of Tamil:

There are five great epics composed probably after the Sangam era and they are, ***Silappatikaram***, ***Manimekalai***, ***Jivaka Chintamani***, ***Valayapathi*** *and* ***Kundalakesi***. It is generally believed by some **Tamil language experts** that these five epics were composed between the 4th to 10th centuries CE, means after the **Sangam Period.** It is very true that these ancient epics do provide historical information about the political, religions, cultural and social life of the Tamil People lived during that period. Out of these five long poems, here, we would discuss **first two epics** in detail and the last three epics in brief.

1. *Silappatikaram* or ***Cilappatikaram*** **(The Tale of an Anklet):**

The epic describes a life story of **Kannagi/Kannaki** a common but upright woman who seeks justice from the ruler of **Pandya kingdom** who without knowing the facts, wrongly punishes her husband **Kovalan** due to a false allegation of theft of an anklet of the Queen.

A brief outline of the famous epical story composed by **Ilango Adigal** (he is said to be the brother of **Chera King**) who named it as ***Silappatikaram*** is give below [1, **8**].

As the story goes, **Kovalan** is the son of a famous merchant lives in Pohar (Poomphar) city of **Chola kingdom**, marries **Kannagi** a daughter of another merchant and after marriage, both start family life in Chola kingdom happily.

The story takes a new turn, when **Kovalan** goes to a place where some young girls regularly perform dances in front of the audience. There he meets a dancer known as **Madhavi** and he gets attracted to her, starts going often to see her performing dance and ultimately falls in love with her. After some time, **Kovalan** leaves **Kannagi** to live with **Madhavi**. After spending a few years together, due to misunderstanding, he decides to leave **Madhavi** and then comes to the place of **Kannagi**. By that time, he has already become pauper as he spends all his wealth earned from his business on **Madhavi**.

After living in poverty for some time, **Kovalan** and **Kannagi** decide to move to **Madurai** the capital of **Pandya dynasty** to set up a new business and begin a fresh life there. After reaching **Madurai**, **Kannagi** gives her anklet to sell for money so that they can buy essential things for their survival. When **Kovalan** approaches a gold-smith of **Madurai** to get money in exchange of an anklet, then the latter goes to the King's palace and reports the king that he has caught a thief who had stolen the anklets the Queen. The king without doing proper investigation, orders the execution of **Kovalan.**

When the news of execution of **Kovalan** reaches **Kannagi,** then she goes to the king and challenges him to show her the anklet of his wife. Things become clear when **Kannagi** proves that Queen's anklet is of pearls and her anklet that was given to **Kovalan** to get money is of gems. **Kannagi**, then in the act of revenge, sets the city of **Madurai** on fire by her chastity without hurting Brahmanas, cows, chaste women, the aged persons and children.

Presence of "Sanatana Marks" in *Silappatikaram* or *Cilappatikaram* [8]

- When **Kovalan** and **Kannagi** leave the **Pohar** city of **Chola kingdom** to proceed towards **Madurai**, the author of epic has described the couple paying respect in **Vishnu temple**, **Buddhist Viharas** and many **Jain monks**.
- Mythological references such as **Indra's city Amaravati**, **Four-faced god Brahma**, **Narada**, **Goddess riding lion** (Durga), **Kali etc.**
- Mention of **North Indian Arya** kings like **King of Avanti**, **king of Magadha.**
- Some North Indian Geological features like **Himalaya, Vindhya, Ganga, and Saraswati (river** or **goddess of learning?).**
- After arrival of **Kovalan** and **Kannagi** in **Madurai** the **Pandya capital city**, the couple comes across **many temples** in the new town such as **Meenakshi**, **Vishnu**, **Shiva**, **Balarama/Baladeva**, **Murugan,** etc.
- **Sanskrit** origin names of the female characters like **Chitrapati**, **Vasantamala**, **Madhavi**, **Malati,** etc. appear in the epic.
- **Four Vedas**, **Brahmana** (this term appears at many places in the epic), **Kaushik Brahmana**, **Vedic mantras, Invocation of Agni and Varuna.**
- **Legendary** names like**; Uma, Shiva, Laxmi, Vishnu, Brahma, Durga, Shakti, Kamsa, Banasura, Agastya, Kama, Rati, Vidyadhara, Bharata,**
- **Surya-kunda** and **Soma-kunda**: the names of the ponds in **river Kaveri**.
- Inclusion of **Buddhist** and **Jain** places of worship and their Philosophies.
- The names of first two months of **Tamil Calendar** given in the epic as ***Chittirai*** and ***Vaikasi;*** incidentally both sound like **Chaitra** and **Vaishakh**, the first two month of **North Indian Calendar**, (as per the information given in the epic, ***Chittirai*** is the month of **Indra's Festival**).
- **Madhavi** (the lover of **Kovalan**) performs **dances** for the general public, probably hints at the influence of **Bharata-muni's Natya-Shastra**.
- **Indra's** capital **Amravati;** Silver-peaked **Kailasa, Narada, Urvashi, Nala-Damayanti story, Pandavas, Yajna,**
- At the end of the story, the composer mentions that **'God Indra** comes on earth specifically to take **Kannagi to Heaven'** implies that the **Hindu mythology** was firmly rooted in the **Tamil Culture** even before the composition of this epic.

2. Manimekalai:

The second most important epic of the ancient **Tamil Literature** is believed to be the sequel of earlier discussed epic, ***Silappatikaram*** and is composed by **Sitalai Sattanar [9. 10]**.

Synopsis of the Tamil Epic '**Manimekalai**'

The key character **Manimekalai** is the daughter of **Kovalan** and **Madhavi**. Even though she is born from the illicit relationship, her mother **Madhavi** (dancer) brings her up in a proper environment with utmost care. When **Manimekalai** becomes a grown up girl, one day, she goes to a flower garden with her friends. At that time, Chola king **Udaykumaran** sees her and falls in love with her. Suddenly, **Manimekala Devi** the **Goddess of Sea** appears there, and takes **Manimekalai** to an island called as **Manipallavam**. There the Goddess gives her three secret powers and a magical bowl known as **Amuta Surabi**. The **Amuta Surabi** possesses the capability of providing an infinite quantity of food, and with the use of same, now she is able to feed all needy and hungry people. Then in the city **of Kaveripatanam**, she meets a Buddhist monk **Aravana Adigal** who explains **Manimekalai** the purpose of life and existence. Finally, with the acquired wisdom and knowledge, **Manimekalai** decides to embrace **Buddhism** and then becomes a **Buddhist monk**.

The epic **Manimekalai** most likely composed after the 5^{th} century CE, brings out the fact that after the **Sangam Period**, in some part of the **Tamil Country**, there existed a strong influence of **Buddhism** on the learned people of that time.

Sanatana Imprints found in the epic 'Manimekalai' [10]

- **The festival of Indra,** an annual event celebrated in the **Chola city Kaveripattanam.**
- Legendary characters such as **Brahma**, **Agastya, Krishna**, **Subhadra**, **Balarama; Mahabharata** characters such as **Virata, Arjuna,** Chinta-Devi, Narayana,
- **Sanskrit origin names** like Chitrapatti, Vasanatamala, Udayakumara, Vidyadhara, Lakshmi, Amrita Surabhi, Champapati, Amarasundari, Janamitra, Brahmadharma, Sridhara, Gomukhi, Aputra, Viswamitra (rishi who gave up his kingdom),

Kayachandika, Chandra-dhatta, Ravivarma, Yashodhara, Rahula, Bhumichandra, Vrischika, Chitrasena,

- A character **Sutamati** tells **Manimekalai** that she is the daughter of **Kaushik Brahmana** who lived in the famous seaport city **Samba/Champa.**
- **Sanskrit terms: Upavanam**, **Karma**, **Brahmana**, **Gandharva**, **Maya**, **Maha Meru**, **Ratna-dwipam**, **Ganga** (river), **Vaishakh** (month name), **Jumbu-dwipa**, **Brahmin from Benares**, the **Goddess of Learning**, Speech and Intellect, **Lakshmi Devi** on her lotus flower, **Kanchanapuram**, **Indra the King of the Devas** who loved **Ahalya**, **Agni**, **Gurjara**, **Maha-Bali**, **Vindhya mountains where Durga** has her abode; **Parasurama** declared mortal enmity to all Kshatriyas and warred against them; **Punya-rajan**,**; Kalinga country**; **Bharatan**; **Madurapati**; **Yojanas**-a measure of distance; **Darbha** (grass);
- **Buddha,** the Lord of the Bodhi Tree; **Wheel of Dharma**, **Jain monk, Buddhist monk, Nirvana**,
- Reference of 'Expert diamond cutters from Magadha, goldsmiths from Marhatta/Maharashtra, artificers from Avanti, carpenters from Yavana and skilled craftsmen of the Tamil country''.
- The story of valour of king of **Vanji** (indicates **Chera** king)/ the celebrated **Cheran Chenguttuvan**, who, with a vast and mighty host of elephants, chariots, horses and warriors, **invaded the North**, crossed the **Ganges in boats**, defeated **Kanaka** and **Vijaya** and **many another Aryan monarch** in battle, and extended the limits of his empire to the very foot of the **snowy Himalayas**.

Summary of other Three Epics [1]

3. ***Civaka Cintamani***: Also spelled as **Jivika Chintamani** is composed by **Jain ascetic Tirutakkatesvar** and it has many Sanskrit words.

4. Kundalakesi: The epic is written by **Natakutanaar**, and promotes the ideas of **Buddhism**.

5. Valayapati: It is a **Jain religious book** and discusses the ascetic family life.

It is generally believed that above three epics (**3**, **4** and **5**) are composed anytime between the 8^{th} to 10^{th} centuries CE and, not immediately after the completion of the two main epics (**1** and **2**) discussed earlier as the latter are said to have written between 300 to 500 CE.

Discussion on the "Sanatana Features" noticed in the Early Tamil Literature

It is very true that the people of ancient Tamilakam had developed their language independently to express their thoughts in the form of poems without taking help from other Indian languages of that period such as *Sanskrit, Pali,* and *Prakrit.* Sangam literature, Tolkapiyyam, Kural, and Five Epics surely stand as testimony for the same.

However, the presence of several **Sanskrit words** and **many legendary characters** in the **Early Tamil Literature** should not merely be seen as the "**loan words** or the **occasional references**"; but needs to be understood as the **systematic transfer of knowledge** on **Vedic Ideology** and **Sanatana Mythology** from the **North Indian Brahmins** to the **South Indian Tamil Speaking People over a very long period**.

Existence of **Vedic features** specifically in **Sangam Literature** manifests that, prior to **500 BCE,** the **North Indian Brahmins** would have interacted with the **People of Tamilakam** and both sides would have shared mythology, social values and literary practices.

In all probabilities, it is the **Brahmins** who would have ventured into **Tamil Land** from the **North**, and slowly engaged the **Kings of South India** in performing **Vedic Sacrifices** first. After attracting the Royal people towards the **Vedic Philosophy**, then the masses would have begun to worship different Vedic Gods. After a few centuries, **Buddhism** and **Jainism** would have made entry into the South India, but the **Brahmins** continued to occupy the prime position in the **old Tamil Society** as they had strong backing of the Royal/Noble People of the land.

In other words, the **North Indian Brahmins did not visit** the **South India** as the **tourists**, but they moved in the **Deep South** with the clear intention to introduce their ideology to the **Royal People of Tamilakam** and then slowly pass on the same to the public. Spreading awareness about the **Sanatana Doctrine** must have taken a long period as the language spoken by the **Brahmins** (**archaic Sanskrit**) was entirely different from the **mother tongue** of the people of **Tamil country**. To do so, they (**Brahmins**) would have decided to settle in the new region, and also learned the language of the masses. It means that, as the newly arrived **Brahmins** got patronage from the **ancient Kings**, they made **Tamilakam** as their home.

When it is said that the Poets who contributed to **Early Sangam Literature** were from the different walks of life, and only a handful of the were **Brahmins**, then it can be concluded that at that time (300 BCE to 300 CE), **there was no caste-based discrimination** in the **Tamil Land**.

II. Epical and Legendary *Sanatana Characters* carved by the Three Tamil Dynasties:

Poems composed during **Sangam Period** (300 BCE to 300 CE), tell us the fact that, at that time, the **Tamil land** was ruled by three different ancient dynasties and their names are **Chola**, **Pandya** and **Chera**. The composers of the two main Tamil epics **Silappatikaram** and **Manimekalai** in their books, have also mentioned about these **three old dynasties**.

Maurya Emperor Ashoka's time, 3rd century BCE rock edict describes the **Cholas, Pandyas, Satyaputras** and **Keralaputras** (**Chera**) as the neighbours, meaning thereby the Tamil countries governed by **these four dynasties** were not the part of the **Maurya Empire**.

Additionally, in the great epic **Mahabharata** as well, the **Pandyas**, **Cholas** and **Cheras** are said to have participated in the Great War fought in the battlefield of **Kurukshetra**.

The main purpose of giving above information is to make it clear that since ancient time, the **Tamilakam** or the Tamil speaking area of the **Indian Sub-continent** was not directly under the control of the **North Indian Kings**, but the latter had **friendly relationship** with the kings of these three famous South Indian dynasties; **Chola, Pandya and Chera**.

As mentioned in the **Early Tamil Literature**, the dynasties like **Early Cholas**, **Early Pandyas** and **Early Cheras** who ruled the parts of **Tamilakam** during the **Sangam Era**, did construct the temples or shrines of worship for **Sanatana**, **Buddhist** and **Jain faiths** and they were most likely built using mud bricks or wooden materials and hence did not last longer.

In this section, we shall discuss about the **architectural creations of the Tamil kings** of **Pallavas**, **Cholas** and **Pandya** dynasties who mostly ruled during the **medieval period** as the monuments made by them have left ever lasting impression on the **history of Tamil Nadu**.

A. Proof of *Sanatana Elements* seen in the Architecture of Pallavas (540 to 880 CE):

As far as **Tamil Country** is concerned, the historians are unanimous in stating that the **kings of Pallava Dynasty of Kanchi** who ruled the present-day Northern as well as Southern Parts of Tamil Nadu state of India from 6th to mid of 9th century CE were the pioneers in the field of the **distinct South Indian Style of Architecture** that was first time developed by them during the **medieval period** in the **Tamilakam**.

This is because, beginning with the **Maurya king Ashoka**; the several rulers of North, Central and Western India such as Kanishka, Satavahana, Gupta, Vakataka and Chalukya of Badami (Vatapi) had already created many architectural wonders in the form of monuments.

It said that after defeating **Kalbhras**, in the 6th century CE, ***Simhavishnu*** re-established the **Pallavas** as the powerful rulers and himself reigned the Sothern Andhra and Northern Tamil land from 575 to 600 CE. But the development of the **Pallava architecture and sculpture** is credited to his son and successor **Mahendravarman-I** who became famous as 'Vichitrachitta'/ *("curious minded")*. Earlier to **Mahendravarman-I** regime, there were no stone sculptures in **Tamilakam**. **Pallava style** architectural phase initially began with the **Rock-cut cave temples**/sculptures similar to **Satavahana** or **Chalukya style Cave Structures** and that subsequently got improvised to **Free-standing structures using rock as the building block.**

The ruler-wise the key creations of some famous **Pallava legendary architectures** are briefly described in the following paragraphs.

Mahendravarman-I Era (Launcher of Mahendra style; 600 to 630 CE):

Earlier believer of **Jain faith,** who then became the devotee of **lord Shiva,** introduced temple construction using **rock-cut techniques**. Some say that **Mahendravarman-I** brought the **Satavahana** tradition of **cave sculptures** from **Andhra** to the **Tamilakam**. Some examples of **rock-cut cave temples** of **Mahendra style/group** are given below.

i. Mandagapattu Tirumurti Temple: The **oldest rock-cut cave temple of Tamil Nadu** state is located in the **Villupuram district** and dedicated to **Hindu** trinity **Brahma-Shiva-Vishnu**. The temple is also known for the **Sanskrit inscriptions** in **Grantha script** of the **Mahendravarman-I** period.

ii. Pallavapuram/Pallavaram Pancha-Pandava Temple: Pallavapuram, a town situated near **Chennai** and on its hill, there exists a rock-cut cave temple of **Trimurti/Hindu Deities** of **Mahendra Group**. However, the ancient site is now in bad shape/ totally neglected as the hill houses **Muslim shrine**/**Mosque/Dargah** and is presently known as **Maula Ka Pahad**.

iii. **Manamdur**: A village located about 10 km away from **Kanchipuram** houses a rock-cut cave temple of **Mahendravarman period** and one of its caves is possibly dedicated to

Narsimha an avatar of **Vishnu**. In other caves, along with **linga of Shiva**, probably other **Hindu** Gods **Brahma**, **Vishnu** and **Shiva** are also depicted. **Sanskrit** inscription is also found.

iv: Dalavanur Sathrumalleswaram Pallava rockcut temple: Dalavanur is small village in Viluppuram district situated in the Northern part of Tamil Nadu, wherein there exists a rock-cut temple of **Mahendravarman** period dedicated to **Shiva**.

Narasimhavarman-I Period (founder of Mamalla style; 630 to 668 CE):

Narasimhavarman-I, the son of **Mahendravarman-I** has left permanent mark on the history and culture **of Tamil Country.** This is due to the fact that, he continued the legacy of his father by adding more **rock-cut temples** to earlier strength in the new sea port city **Mahabalipuram/ Mamallapuram**. It is said that after defeating **Chalukya king Pulakeshin-II** in the latter's capital cit**y Vatapi** in the year **642** CE, he brought the fantastic artistic features of **Chalukya** country's rock-cut cave structures and temples to the land of **Tamil**. His special achievements in the form of creation of new architecture/sculptures are as under.

Mahabalipuram Monuments (near **Kanchi**): Apart from the monolithic famous rock-cut **Pancha Rathas temple complex** situated near the sea shore, following are some examples of the sculptures exhibiting **Hindu legends** carved during the regime of **Narasimhavarman-I.**

- Sculptural depiction of **Hindu mythological tales** on the panels and temple walls such as carved stories of "**Penance of Arjuna**" and "**Descent of Ganga** (river)" on the big stones.
- **Mahishasuramardhini Mandapa or cave:** the Goddess considered as the incarnation of **Durga**, and in a cave wall there is a rock-cut image depicting a scene of a war between Goddess **Durga** and buffalo headed demon known as **Mahishasura**.
- **Varaha cave temple** based on the legendary story of incarnation of **Vishnu** as a boar.

Narsimhavarman-II Era (originator of Rajasimha style; 695-728 CE)

Pallava king **Narsimhavarman-II** (also known as **Rajasimha**) pioneered the construction of **independent structural temples** using specially **shaped separate rocks as the building blocks**. This type of temple is commonly called as **free-standing temple**.

The best examples of **Rajasimha** style temple constructions are the **Shore temple** at **Mamallapuram;** and **Kailasanatha temple complex** at **Kanchipuram**.

The **Shore temple Complex** of **Mahabalipuram** belongs to **structural** class built with **granite blocks** under the patronage of Pallava king **Narsimhavarman-II;** hence categorised as the **Rajasimha style of Pallava Art** and devoted to **Shiva, Vishnu and Durga.**

External walls of the **Shore temp**le engraved with the images of **Anantashayi Vishnu** (**Vishnu** in reclining posture); **Krishna** killing demon **Keshi**; **Krishna** dancing on the hood of **Kaliaya** Naga/serpent; **Vishnu** mounting on his vehicle **Garuda** and **Vishnu** rescuing an elephant from the grip of a crocodile**.**

The Kailasanatha temple of **Kanchipuram** is the illustration of the supreme architectural achievement of **Pallava's period**. It demonstrates the exceptional skills of the **local Tamil artists** who intricately carved stones into the galaxy of wonderful images of **Hindu Deities** and thus transformed them into one of **the greatest masterpieces** of the **Sanatana/Hindu Temple Structures**. Although the temple is mainly dedicated to lord **Shiva**, but it also houses other Hindu Deities like **Vishnu**, **Shakti/Devi** and some familiar Vedic Deities like, **Surya**, **Ganesha**, and **Kartikeya** etc. **Granite** stone is used for the foundation of **Kailasanatha temple**, but the images/carvings are made of **sandstones**. On one of the walls of temple along with carved images of **Uma** and **Mahesvara** (**Parvati** and **Shiva**), **Brahma** and **Vishnu** are also shown. On the inner wall of a corridor, some **avatars/incarnations** of **Vishnu** such as **Varaha**, **Narasimha**, **Trivikrama/Wamana**, **and Vishnu** mounting on **Garuda** have been depicted. Moreover, images of **Durga**, Dancing pose of **Shiva** (***Tandava Nritya***) are also seen on the walls of temple.

Nandivarman-II (731 to 795 CE) style Architecture:

Vaikuntha Perumal temple/ Parameswara Vinnagaram of **Kanchipuram** was built by **Nandivarman-II.** It is the biggest sandston**e** temple built in the **post-Rajasimha period** and is dedicated to **Vishnu**. It is a three storeyed temple which hosts **Vishnu** in three different floors in different postures; seated, resting and standing**.** Some of the temple sculptures exhibit some events from the epic **Mahabharata**, depicting the images of **three Pandavas** namely, **Dharmaraja**, **Arjuna** and **Bhima**.

In short, the architectures of **Pallava period** do exhibit **strong religious significance** as the kings of Pallava dynasty did highlight the **Sanatana Features** found in various ancient **Sanskrit scriptures**, legends and epics that were composed in the North India.

Inscription of Adi-Varaha Perumal Cave Temple of Mahabalipuram describes Ten Incarnations/Avataras of Vishnu

It is strange but fact that there is an inscription written in the **Grantha** script above the **Harihara** panel of **Adi-Varaha Perumal Temple of Mamallapuram** that was believed to have been built during the period of at least two different Pallava kings i.e. **Mahendravarman-I** and **Narasimhavaram-I** which gives details about the **ten avataras**/incarnations of God **Vishnu** in the order as ***Matsya*** (fish), ***Kurma*** (tortoise), ***Varaha*** (boar), ***Narasimha*** (man-lion combination), ***Vamana*** (a dwarf Brahmin), ***Rama*** (Parasurama), ***Rama*** (king **Rama** of Ayodhya), ***Rama*** (Balarama), ***Buddha*** and ***Kalki.*** The three **Ramas** of the inscription need to be understood as **Parashurama** (the son of Rishi **Jamadagni)**, **Lord Rama** (the son of **Ayodhya** king **Dasharatha** and the hero of epic **Ramanaya**) and **Balarama** (the elder brother of **Krishna**) respectively. Surprisingly, the list excludes **Krisha** as avatar of **Vishnu**, but it includes **Buddha** as the **ninth avatar**. It means to say that at the time of construction of this temple, the **learned People who lived during the Pallava period in the Tamil Country** were fully aware of the **Dashavataras of Vishnu** described in the **Hindu Puranas**.

B. Imprints of *Sanatana Features* in the Architectures of the Cholas (850 to 1200 CE):

As discussed elsewhere, during the period of ***Sangam literature***, the ancient **Tamilakam** was governed by the three distinct dynasties and they were; **Early Cholas**, **Early Cheras** and **Early Pandyas**. Here we are going to discuss about the rule of **Imperial Cholas** who brought almost all parts of **Tamil Country** under their control especially during the **medieval period**.

As per the historical records, **Vijayalaya Chola** (847 – 871 CE) and his son **Aditya-I** together laid the foundation of the medieval **Chola Empire**. It is said that in the beginning, **Vijayalaya Chola** defeated **Elango Mutharaiyar** and conquered **Tanjavur** from the **Mutharailar** dynasty. Then with the help of local chieftain, he vanquished **Pandyas** first and then drove away the **Pallavas** form the **Kaveri river basin** and first established his rule in the

region adjoining **Kaveri River (central Tamil Nadu)**. After sometime, **Pandya** King from the south joined hands with **Pallavas of Kanchi**, and forced **Vijayalaya Chola** to concede the defeat and then the latter had to become the subordinate to **Pandya of Madurai**.

Aditya-I (871-907 CE), the son of **Vijayalaya Chola** took the revenge his father's loss in the battle against the alliance of **Pandya** and **Pallava**, as in the year **880 CE** he defeated **Pandya king** with the help of the **Pallavas** and **Western Ganga** and added the territory of **Pandya** to his kingdom. Then in the year **897 CE**, **Chola kin**g **Aditya-I** overthrew the **Pallavas** from the **Northern region** of the **Tamil Land** and annexed that area to his kingdom. In this way, **Chola king Aditya-I** through his aggressive military campaign, bravely established himself as the powerful ruler and also expanded **Chola kingdom** in the north, south and west directions of **Tamilakam**. To strengthen his position further, he diplomatically ventured into the matrimonial alliances with the **Cheras** and **Rashtrakutas** (of **Malkhed**/Karnataka) and also maintained the friendly relationship with the **Pallavas**.

As per the records, **Imperial Cholas**; **Aditya-**I and his son **Parantaka-I** built many temples along the banks of **river Kaveri** specifically to show their affection for the **Sanatana Faith**. These temples were smaller in size as compared to the huge monuments constructed by the **Later Cholas**. **Vijayalaya Cholaswaram** in **Narthamalai** village near **Padukkottai** is one of the surviving temples built by the founders of the Chola dynasty in the **central Tamilakam**. This rock-cut temple is dedicated to Hindu gods **Shiva** and **Vishnu**, possibly in continuation of the **Pallava tradition** of construction (some historians say that the original temple was built by **Ilangovathi Mutharayar** (alias) Chathambuthi who ruled that area earlier to Cholas which was damaged by heavy rains and that was subsequently rebuilt and expanded by the Cholas).

Varadaraja Perumal temple (also called **Thirubuvanai Temple** and **Thodatri Perumal temple**) is located in **Thirubhuvanai** village of **Puducherry** (Union Territory), believed to have constructed by Chola king **Parantaka-I** (907-950 CE) and devoted to **Maha-Vishnu**. The temple has many episodes of legends sculpted on its walls, the notable being the legends of **Rama** and **Krishna**. These sculptures are very important as they clearly prove that the story of **Ramayana** was already known to the People of **Ancient Tamil country** even before the **Ramayana** composed by **Tamil** Poet **Kambar** in 12th century CE.

Alandurai Mahadevar temple dedicated to **Shiva** is also known as **Brahamapurisvara Tirupullamangai**. It is Located in a village **Pasupathikoil**, at Papanasam taluk of Tanjavur district, Tamil Nadu and was constructed during **Parantaka Chola-I** (907-

954 CE). This temple is one of the seven shrines associated with ***Saptamartrikas*** **(**seven female deities in ***Siva*** temple). Matrikas are the different forms ***Adi Parashakti***. Images of other **Hindu deities** like **Brahma, Durga**, **Vishnu**, **Narasimha**, **and Tripurantaka** are part of the temple. The temple has many panels illustrating the stories from **Ramayana and Mahabharata**. (Source---**The Rāmayana Narrative at Puḷḷamaṅgai Brahmapurīśvara Temple by Gokul Seshadri**)

Durgai Amman Temple is a **Hindu temple** dedicated to the **Goddess Durga** located in **Thenupuriswarar Temple** as a separate shrine, **Patteeswaram** near Kumbhakonam, Tamil Nadu. The Sanskrit word **Durga** means a fortified or well-protected place. The idol of **Durga** was installed by the **Early Imperial Cholas** in the temple and hence it became famous during the Cholas regime. It is said that the Chola kings used to visit this temple and get blessings of Goddess **Durga** before any battle. Here the Goddess **Durga** is seen having three eyes and eight hands in which she holds her weapons. Her legs rest on the demon **Mahishasura** whom the Goddess killed. The Goddess holds all the weapons, but she has such grace and mercy on her face that a mother has for her children. She is considered as **Shanta Swarupi** (calm or peaceful face). **Goddess Durga** was the family deity of **Chola king Rajaraja-I**.

Now it is time to bring on record some selected **Gigantic and the most adorable Hindu Temples** which were constructed by the other kings of **Chola Dynasty** specifically to look for **special Sanatana Aspects**.

1. Brihadisvara temple at **Tanjavur** built by **Rajaraja-I:**

It was built by Chola emperor **Rajaraja-I** (reigned from 985 CE to 1014 CE) between **1003** to **1010 CE** on the south bank of river **Kaveri** in the Chola's capital city **Tanjavur.** It is also called as **Rajarajesvaram** (the **lord of Rajaraja**). It is one of the largest **Shiva** temples in India and the entire temple is made out of granite stones. It houses the tallest **Vimana (Shikhara)** in the world and has a very big **Shiva-linga** (8.7m high). It is one of the largest monolithic linga sculptures in India [1, 12, 14, 15].

The walls of passages of the temple are covered with panels having painting and miniature sculptures depicting the events/scenes from the **Epics** and **Purana**s revealing the emotional attachment of the king **Rajaraja-I** to **Sanatana Religion**. On the inner walls of temple, **108 dance poses** of **lord Shiva** (based on the **Natya-shastra**) have been engraved indicating the keen interest shown by the king **Rajaraja-I** in the decoration of temple.

There are smaller shrines around the main **Shiva** temple, and these are dedicated to god's consort **Parvati**, his sons **Murugan/Kartikeya** and **Ganesha**, **Nandi**, **Varahi**, **Karuvur deva** (the guru of Rajaraja Chola), **Chandeshvara** and **Nataraja**.

2. **Brihadisvara Temple** at **Gangaikonda-Cholisvaram** built by **Rajendra-I:**

The **Brihadisvara Temple** is a Hindu temple located at **Gangaikonda Cholapuram** about 70 kilometres from the **Tanjavur Brihadisvara Temple**. It was built by Chola king **Rajendra-I** (reigned from 1014 to 1044 CE), completed in the year 1035 CE. Although the main temple is dedicated to the Chola's favourite god **Shiva,** but it also displays other **Hindu Deities** such as **Vishnu**, **Durga (Goddess Kali)**, **Surya**, **Harihara**, **Ardhanarishvara, Brahma, Gajalaxmi** etc. The sanctum contains **Brihadisvara** (**Shiva**) in the form of ***lingam***. This ***lingam*** is 4 m tall and the base has a circumference of 18 m.

On the nine different panels of **Brihadisvara Gangaikondacholesvara** temple, there exists **Navagrahas** (nine planetary Deities) or the nine elements of the **Hindu astrology**.

In addition to above, the temple walls depict **Shiva** in various postures of bestowing favours or anugraha: Ravananugraha-murti, Vishnvanugraha-murti, Devyanugraha- murti, Chandesanugraha-murti, Kalyanasundara- murti, and Markandeyanugraha-murti. There are two beautiful images of **Varaha** avatar of **Vishnu** and the Goddesses **Lakshmi** and **Saraswati**.

Carvings present on the side walls exhibit the tales of **Hindu Legends** and **Mythology** pertaining to **Shaiva**, **Vaishnava** and **Shakta** traditions. There are many bronze statues in the temple depicting **Chola art** of the 11th century, and one is of **Kartikeya**.

3. Airavatesvara Temple at Darasuram built by **Rajaraja II:**

Airavatesvara Temple is situated at **Kumbhakonam** town in **Tanjavur** district and was built by Chola king **Rajaraja-II** (reigned from 1146–1172 CE) in the 12th century CE. The temple, dedicated to Lord **Shiva**, is named after '***Airavat***', the majestic white elephant of Lord **Indra**.

This stone temple depicts many important **Vedic** and **Puranic Deities** such as Indra, Agni, Varuna, Vayu, Brahma, Surya, Vishnu, Saptamatrikas, Durga, Saraswati, Sri devi (Lakshmi), Ganga, Yamuna, Subrahmanya, Ganesha, Kama, Rati etc.

4. Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram built by **Chola and Pandya Kings**:

Here the Lord **Shiva** is worshipped as **Nataraja** in the **dancing pose** as the "**Ananda Tandava**" ("*Dance of Delight*"). It is said that even before 500 CE, during Sangam period, there was **Shiva temple** probably made out of Wood and/or brickwork at the same place. The present temple was built by the kings of **Chola dynasty** in the 10th century when **Chidambaram** was their capital. In the last thousand years, **Thillai Nataraja temple** was renovated after damage on many occasions and also expanded by the Ruling class.

The surviving **Nataraja temple** has a structure that was built by the king of Imperial Chola Dynasty (850 CE – 1250 CE). Once the **Chidambaram town** served as the capital for the Early Imperial Cholas, hence it was important for them. Additionally, **Shiva Nataraja** was their family deity.

Chit+**Ambara**=**Chidambaram**

Chit means **Wisdom**,

Ambara means **Sky** (unlimited space or not measurable).

Though the temple is dedicated to **Shiva as Nataraja**, the images of other **Hindu Deities** such as Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, and Murugan are also present in the temple complex.

In the same complex, Lord **Vishnu** is worshipped as the **Lord Govindaraja Perumal** in a separate shrine. It is one of the rare temples wherein both the **Shaivate** and **Vaishnavate deities are worshipped regularly**. This ancient temple is built through generous contributions from the rulers of many dynasties like Pallava, Chola, Pandya, Chera, and Vijayanagara.

The temple has total nine gates, and out of the nine, four gates have **Gopurams** in the East, West, North, and South directions. Each **Gopuram** (a tall structure at the gateway) is colourful and unique in its own ways. They depict stories from different **Hindu texts**, showing **religious scenes** from the various **Sanatana traditions**.

- The **Eastern Gopuram** has all **108 Bharata-natyam dancing poses**.
- The **Western Gopuram**, built around 1150 CE, is the smallest Gopuram. There are, however, statues representing the **Goddess battling the buffalo monster**.
- It is said that a **Pandya king** built the **South Gopuram**, called the Sokkaseeyan Thirunilai Ezhu Gopuram. This is shown by the **carved fishes** (Pandya king's banner) in the ceiling. The artwork of southern gopuram include Chandesha, Ganapati, Vishnu, Sridevi (Lakshmi), several

Devis, Brahma, Saraswati, Surya, Chandra, Durga, Indra, Agni, several *rishis*, Ganga and Yamuna goddesses, Kama and Rati, Buddha, the Vedic sages such as Narada, Pantanjali, Somaskanda legend, Ardhanarishvara (half Shiva, half Parvati), Harihara (half Vishnu, half Shiva), several forms of dancing and standing Shiva such as Pashupata, Kiratarjuna and Lingobhava, as well as others

- The **North Gopuram** was built approximately 1300 CE, but in the 16th century Vijayanagara ruler **Krishnadevaraya** built additional brick construction.

5. Kampaheswarar Temple, Thirubuvanam built by **Kulothunga Chola III**:

This Hindu temple is devoted to Lord **Shiva**, but here the god is worshipped as **"Kampahareswarar"**. It was built by **Kulothunga Chola III** (reigned from 1178 to 1218 CE) in a village **Thirubhuvanam** located near **Tanjavur** city after completing the successful military campaign against the North Indian Rulers.

6. Arulmigu Arunachalam Temple:

The **Arunachalesvara** temple or **Annamalaiyar** temple dedicated to **Shiva** and **Parvati** is located in **Tiruvannamalai** district of Tamil Nadu. It is a part of **Pancha Bhoota Sthalam**, and represents **Fire** element of Nature. It is said that the Cholas during 9th century CE, built the oldest part of temple, but the kings of Vijayanagara and Nayakas have constructed several structures including **Raja-Gopuram** the tallest Gopuram of temple in the east direction. There are images of other **Hindu Deities** like **Nandi**, **Surya**, **Durga**, **Venugopala** etc.

Chola Bronze Statues

The most remarkable thing about the old **Tamil artists** belonging to **Chola** regime is, starting from the 9th to 13th century CE, the craftsmen of **Tamilakam** did produce thousands of intricate but relatively small (as compared to stone idols) and portable bronze sculptures many of them are of **Lord Shiva in different forms** and other Hindu Deities like **Vishnu, Parvati, Durga, and Ganesh** etc**.** However**,** among them the most outstanding cast bronze image is **Shiva in a dancing posture,** popularly known as **Nataraja**, which is highly regarded for its divine, elegant, and abstract form, depicting **Shiva** in a **dynamic dancing** pose surrounded by symbolic elements like fire, a drum, and a rearing cobra. The **Chola bronzes** represent the **Sanatana tradition of bhakti**, which intimately exhibits a **personal worship** of a deity in the form of a **metal idol** manifesting the changes in devotional practices of the time.

C. Traits of *Sanatana Doctrine* found in the Pandyas' Country:

Pandya Dynasty is the oldest among the three key Dynasties (other being **Chola** and **Chera**) who ruled southernmost part of the South India since 5th century BCE. **Sangam Literature** (300 BCE to 300 CE) informs us that the assemblies of the ancient Poets belonging to different parts of **Tamilakam**, used to take place in **Madurai**, the capital city of the kingdom of **Pandya**. It is believed that some **Pandya kings** followed **Jainism** for a few centuries before changing over to **Shaivism** and **Vaishnavism**. However, during the **medieval period**, the Pandyas became the patrons of **Vedic Philosophy**. The **Velvikudi inscription** of 8th century CE written in **Tamil** and **Sanskrit** provides information on the renewal of grant of **Velvikudi** village to a **Brahman**a. It means to say that similar to the **Pallavas** who ruled from **Kanchi** 6th to 9th century CE (Northern and Central part of Tamil Country), the **Pandyas of Madurai** of **medieval era** also established the practice **Brahmadeya** (land grant to a Brahmana) in the Southernmost Tamil-speaking region, but after the end of the regime of **Kalabhras**.

Under the leadership of king **Kadungon**, the **Pandyas** regained their identity that was lost during the **Kalabhras** period. From 6th to 9th century CE, along with the **Pallavas of Kanchi**, the **Chalukyas of Badami**, the **Pandyas of Madurai** became the main players in the **South Indian politics**. Some historians claim that the **Pandya dynasty** is the **longest ruling dynasty in the wor**ld.

Hindu Temple Construction during Pandya's period

The Kings of Pandya dynasty built many temples that included the Rock-cut caves and the Structural temples in the regions ruled by them as well as the areas acquired by them.

As discussed earlier, in **Tamilakam**, the **Pallavas** were the pioneers in making the **rock-cut cave temples**. The **Pandyas** too created their mark by constructing about **60 Rock-cut caves** in the locations such as Pillayarpatti, Tirumeyyam, Kuntrakkudi, Tiruchendur, Kalugumalai, Kanyakumari and Sittannavasal. Some **Pandya's rock-cut caves** are dedicated to **Jain Faith**.

Kundrakudi – 8th century cave temple devoted to Lord **Murugun.**

Kalugumalai – 8th century make cave temple dedicated to **Shiva**.

Anaimalai--8th century cave temple dedicated to **Vishn/UgraNarasimha**.

Tirunelveli---rock-cut style temple devoted to **Shiva** and **Parvati**.

Thiruparankundram---8th century rock-cut cave temples exhibit the images of Hindu Deities Murugan, Durga, Shiva, four faced Brahma, Vishnu etc.

Thirumayam---- 8th century rock-cut shrines of **Shiva** (locally known as ***Satyagirishvara*** Temple*)* and **Vishnu** (***Sathyamurthi Perumal*** Temple).

Paraikulam---8th century rock-cut temple is devoted to **Shiva**.

Mahibalanpatti----rock-cut temple of Sri Poongundra Nayaki Amman Temple (***Durga***).

Trichy ---8th century cave temple houses images of Hindu Deities such as Ganesha, Brahma, Vishnu, Durga Murugan, and Surya.

Some Medieval and the **Later Pandyas** built a few temples, but paid maximum attention to the expansion and/or renovation of the pre-existing temples constructed either by **their ancestors** or **Pallavas** or **Cholas** as they added new structures to earlier temple complexes like new Gopuram, Mandapam and circumbulations. Decorative mega size pillars having intricate carvings is the speciality of the **Pandya** style of structures.

Some of the Structural Temples constructed by the **Pandyas** are discussed below.

1. Meenakshi Amman Temple, Madurai:

Meenakshi Temple is one of the most popular places being visited every year by the world-wide tourists because of its marvellous architectures. This temple finds its mention in the **Sangam Literature** (300 BCE to 300 CE) and the epic **Silapattikaram**. It is said that old temple was completely devastated earlier. Then a new temple was built by the **Pandian Emperor Sadayavarman Kulasekaran** (1190-1205 CE) in the 12th century. Most of the present campus structure was rebuilt after the 14th century CE, further repaired, renovated and expanded in the 17th century by **Tirumala Nayaka**. It is quite an architectural marvel with **14 temple towers** with a height ranging between 45-50 metres. A **1000 pillared hall** is another major feature with exquisitely sculpted pillars. There are musical pillars which produce sounds of different scales.

In the temple premises, Lord **Shiva** is present as **Sundareswarar** and his **fish-eyed spouse**, as **Meenakshi**. There are five massive gateways enclosing these two shrines. Goddess **Meenakshi** was the **family Deity of Pandyas**.

2. Srivilliputhur Andal Temple:

Srivilliputhur Andal Temple is in the **Virudhunagar** district of Tamil Nadu, about 80 km from Pandya's capital city **Madurai.** This masterpiece is dedicated to the **Goddess Andal** and **Lord Ranganatha**. It is one of the **108 Divya Desams**, the holy shrines of **Vishnu**. This temple venerates **Vishnu** as **Vatapatrasayi** and his consort **Lakshmi** as **Andal**. It is said that the impressive temple tower was erected by **Perialwar**, with the assistance from the Pandiyan king **Vallabadevan** (765-815 AD). The shrine dedicated to **Andal** was built by various kings of the Pandya dynasty over time, with significant renovations carried out by King **Thirumalai Nayaka**. Sculptures of other deities such as **Mohini**, **Rama**, **Kamadeva**, **Rati**, and **Garuda** are also present.

3. Koodal A̲lagar or **Koodal Azhagar Temple**:

Koodal A̲lagar Temple or "Koodal Allhagar Temple" in **Madurai**, a city in the Tamil Nadu and is dedicated to the Hindu god **Vishnu**. The temple is originally believed to be built by the **Pandyas**, with later additions by the kings of V**ijayanagara Empire** and **Madurai Nayakas** who commissioned pillared halls and major shrines of the temple during the 16th century.

The images of **Sridevi** and **Bhudevi** are present in either sides of **Koodal A̲lagar**. There are smaller shrines of **Rama**, **Lakshmi Narayana**, and **Krishna** located close to the sanctum.

4. Sri Vaikuntanathan Perumal Temple

There are **Nine Vishnu temples** on the banks of the river **Thamirabarani** in the Thoothukudi district are called **Nava Tirupati**. These **9 Vishnu temples** are classified under 1**08 Divya Desams**.

It is believed that the temple was built during the **Pandya king's** period and later expanded by the **Vijayanagara kings** and **Madurai Nayakas**.

5. Kashi Viswanathar Temple, Tenkasi:

Kashi Viswanathar Temple is located **Tenkasi** city in the state of Tamil Nadu, is dedicated to the Hindu god **Shiva**. **Tenkasi** means **Kashi of South**. It is believed that the original temple was built by **Pandyan ruler, Parakrama Pandya during the 15th century**, with later additions from **Madurai Nayaka**s. Images of **Durga**, **Nataraja**, and **Navagrahas** are also found in the temple complex.

Two famous Temples of Tamil Country supported by many Medieval Kings

a. Rangaraja Temple Srirangam, Tiruchirapalli

Known as ***Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple*** or **Thiruvaranga Tirupati**, located at **Srirangam**, near **Tiruchirapalli** is the most important **Vaishnava** temple in Tamil Nadu and recognised as the first and foremost among the **108 Vaishnava divya desam**/holy places. The temple complex is situated in 156 acres area. It has seven Prakaras or enclosures. There are **21 colourful and beautifully decorated magnificent gateway towers or Gopurams** inside the Complex. The temple complex lies on an islet, formed by the **Twin Rivers; Kaveri** and **Kollidam**.

It has a main shrine where the **Lord Ranganatha (Vishnu)** is found in a **reclining posture** in his serpent bed. There are also sub-shrines for **Vishvaksena**, **Rama**, **Krishna, Nachiyar**, **Chakratalvar**, **Garuda**, **Hanuman**, **Andal** etc. and for all the **Alvars** and the Acharyas up to Vedanta Desika within the precincts.

According to the **Hindu Puranas**, king **Dharma Varma** belonging to the **Early Chola dynasty**, built the earliest temple on the bank of river Kaveri (before 2nd BCE?). The temple is mentioned in an ancient Tamil literature of the **Sangam Era** (3th Century BC to 3th Century CE). It is also mentioned in the old Tamil epic **Silapattikaram**.

But the available historical records provide information on the additions or renovations carried out by a specific ruler, as well as the donations given by different kings belonging to several dynasties who ruled the surrounding region sometime or other, still the exact timeline of the origin of temple and its overall development remains a subject of debate.

There are more than **800 inscriptions** written in the **six Indian languages** found inside the temple complex that dated from the 9th to 16th Century CE. They belong to the Imperial

Cholas, Later Pandya, Hoysala, and Vijayanagara dynasties who looked after the temple and made large contributions to it. Names of some of the donors are as follows.

Chola king Parantaka I (907 - 955 CE)—gold and silver for making lamps.

Parantaka II (Sundara Chola 956 - 973 CE)—grant for establishing Vedic school and festival.

Aniruddha - the minister of Parantaka II (955 - 985 CE)—special grant for festival purpose.

Raja Raja-I Chola (985 - 1014 CE) --- gift of gold and hundred cows.

Rajamahendran Veedhi, a prince of the Chola dynasty--- a serpent couch for Lord.

Vikrama Chola (1070 -1125 CE) ---built Goshala and shrine for Rama and Krishna.

Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1251 - 1268 CE) ---covered Ranga Vimana with Gold, erected three gold domes, gifted precious stones/jewels garlands, golden vessels, golden ship etc.

After 1480 CE, the Vijayanagara Emperors including **Krishnadevaraya** and their military commanders and the **Nayakas of Tanjavur** and **Madurai** gave generous donations and undertook renovations as the temple that was in poor state due to the Muslim invasions from the Delhi Sultanate who looted it since beginning of 14th century CE on several occasions. These **Telugu speaking Hindu rulers** also added several structures inside the complex such as Hanuman Idol, shrine for lord Dhanvanatari, Vimana, Gopura, thousand pillar Mandapa etc.

b. Ramanathaswamy Temple, Rameswaram

The **Ramanathaswamy Temple of Tamil Nadu** is situated in **Rameswaram**, a small town surrounded by the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. It is devoted to Lord **Shiva** who is worshipped in the form of **Linga** and one among the **twelve sacred Jyotirlingas** mentioned in the **Hindu Puranas**. It is also a part of **Char Dham** pilgrimages/four abodes. The **Ramanathaswamy** Temple is a prominent place of worship for **Shaivates and Vaishnavate**s.

Some say that the old temple was expanded by the ruler of **Pandya dynasty** in 12th century CE. Then in the 14th century, **Malik Kafur** the military commander of the Delhi Sultanate looted the temple for gold and jewels.

Present structure of the **Ramanathaswamy temple** was built in 17th century in the Dravidian style using limestone and granite with the help of the **Jaffna king**. Though the medieval Cholas and the Pandyas were the great kingdoms who played vital roles in the

establishments of various marvellous temples in their reigns, but their contribution in the development of **present-day Rameswaram temple** is very little. **Madurai Nayaka king** in (1667 CE) gave donations for the renovation of the temple. **Vijayanagara kings** during the early 15th century, added the composite columns of **Virabhadra** holding sword and horn. Maximum contributions came from the **Setupatis**, the breakaway from **Madurai Nayakas**, who ruled **Ramanathapuram** and contributed to the **Ramanathaswamy temple**. The most notable of them are the contributions of **Muthu Kumara Ragunatha** and **Muthu Ramalinga Setupati**, who transformed the temple to the magnificent architectural monument.

Inside the temple complex, there are separate shrines for the goddess V**ishalakshi**, the *utsava* images, *sayanagriha*, **Vishnu** and **Ganesha**.

- As per the inscriptional records, the **kings of Pandya clan** built Gopuram and Mandapam in Chidambaram and Ranganatha temple complexes.
- The practice of distributing **prasādam** – consecrated food or other substances offered to the deity was introduced during **13th century by a Pandya King**.

Engraving the 108 images of the dance poses as per the Natya-Shastra--- A case study

Bharatamuni's Natyashastra describes the theory of **Bhava** and **Rasa** that is very much useful in the field of performing arts. Since ancient time, several episodes selected from the **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata** the two great Indian epics originally written in Sanskrit have been presented by the stage artists in the form of performing arts. As **Natyashastra** was composed in **Sanskrit,** it was originally meant for the elite and educated class of that period. In other words, only **Sanskrit knowers** like the **Brahmins** and the **Kshatriyas/Ruling class** were able to understand the basic knowledge behind the performing arts.

There are two types of dances described in **Natyashastra** and they are- **Tandava** and **Lasya**. **Tandava** is believed to be related to **Shiva** and **Lasya** is believed to be related to Parvati. As far as male-oriented **Dance** is concerned, **Tandava** form of **Lord Shiva** is taken as the divine symbol of the performing art. **Tandava Nritya of Nataraja** symbolically exhibits rhythmic creation and destruction that is believed to occur in cosmos. Generally speaking, a dancer needs to get connected with the audience through the gestures and movements of his/her

body parts as the viewers are interested in experiencing effect of **Bhava** and **Rasa** that is systematically presented by a trained stage artist. **Tandava** is considered to be **Veera- Rasa** and female-oriented dance **Lasya** is felt as the **Shringara-Rasa**.

(Information sourced from **Natya shastra of Bharatamuni;** written by **Manmohan Ghosh**, 1950)

As mentioned earlier, during the medieval period, in the Tamil Country, the kings of three prominent Dynasties (Pallavas, Cholas, and Pandyas) constructed several glorious temples that were dedicated to the key **Hindu Deities** like Shiva, Vishnu, Marugan /Kartikeya/ Subrahmanya, Durga/Mahishasurmardini, and Parvati/Meenakshi etc. Among them, in the **Five Temples of the medieval period**, **108 karanas** or **poses of Dance** described in **Natyashastra** that form the basis for **Bharatanatyam** dance, have been artistically engraved on the stones and they are: **1. Veerateeswarar temple** of Thiruvathigai (Pallava, 6 to 7th century); **2. Brihadishvara/Rajarajesvara temple** of Tanjavur (Chola, 11th century); **3. Sarangapani temple of** Kumbhakonam (Chola, 12 to 13 century); **4. Nataraja temple** of Chidambaram (Chola and Pandya, 12 to 15 century); and **5. Arunachaleshvar temple** of Thiruvannamalai (Vijayanagara kngdom, 16th century)

In a way, it can be taken as the **old method of visual documentation** practically used by the founders of these temples, as for the centuries, these **108 carved images** of the **Bharatanatyam** have been mesmerising the curious onlookers who show keen interest in knowing the original principles behind the **Indian classical dances**. These images need to be seen beyond the religious characters as each dancing figure/Deity symbolically represents acquired or inherent skill of a human being who sincerely displays the same in the form of art.

As a matter of fact, only a few selected members of **Brahmin community** would be knowing **Natyashastra**. This is because, right from the childhood, in the Vedic schools of that time (**Gurukula** system), every pupil was mostly taught about the **Hindu scriptures** such as Vedas, Upanishadas, and how to perform day-to-day rituals like Yajnas etc. Only a handful of the Brahmins who had liking and curiosity in knowing the finer details of art, would have learned the subjects like **Shilpashastra** and **Natyashastra** from the experts of these fields.

For example: Out of the current Indian population of 1400 million (about 140 crores), around 750 million (75 crores) Indians would have either read or heard about the stories based on the famous but the most popular epics like **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata**. However, hardly

about 1 million (10 lakhs) present-day Indian people would be having basic knowledge of **Bharatamuni's Natyashastra** as it is not a very popular subject.

Taking a clue from the above mentioned example, a question can be framed as "when the **local craftsmen only spoke the Tamil** language, and hence a very special subject like **Natyashastra** written in **Sanskrit** was **out of bounds** for them, then how did they know about the different postures of the dance, before taking up the actual carving work?"

Only possible answer for the above question is, a **Brahmin** (s) who had earlier studied **Natyashastra** under the guidance of an expert of that time and had practical knowledge of the subject too, would have given the **learning lessons beforehand** to the team of **Tamil speaking highly skilled sculptors**.

It means to say that well before giving go ahead to the engraving activity on a stone, the **learned Brahmin** had passed on the basic information on the each pose of dance to a selected artist and possibly demonstrated the same by performing that particular pose in front the craftsman. This would have created proper impression of a dance pose in the mind of a sculptor. As the sculptor understood what exactly he needed to do to meet the requirement, he then used the knowledge gained through the interaction with the **Brahmin/tutor** to complete his task of engraving the permanent image on a stone.

Since shaping a stone into a dance pose would have taken a few days to finish, the Brahmin/guide would have supervised the work of a sculptor on a regular basis so as to get the best out of him. This act of a **Brahmin** would have boosted the morale of a sculptor further.

In this way, through the **collaborative efforts of the learned Brahmins** and the **Tamil speaking sculptors**, the wonderful pieces of architectures in the form of huge Temple complexes that included the idols of Deities, gopuram, maha-mandapams, carved pillars and panels depicting different scenes from the **Hindu legends** and the epics like **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata** and the **beautiful paintings** were created.

Please bear in mind that it is the **Brahmins** lived in the **Tamil country** knew the ancient **Sanatana scriptures** and **legends** as these things were taught to them by their ancestors. The **Tamil kings** definitely provided necessary **financial** and **logistic supports** needed to complete these monuments. However, the **Ruling class** would have left the responsibility of monitoring the progress of these structures to the **senior Brahmins** as they had the knowledge of **Agamas** and **Shilpashastra**. These marvellous constructions reflect **synergistic action** of the **Tamil Rulers**, the **Sanatana Brahmins** and the highly skilled **Craftsmen of Tamilakam**.

Discussion on the "Printing the Sanatana Elements on Tamilakam Temple Structures"

As per one estimate, there are more than **80,000 temples** in **Tamil Nadu state of India** and among them, about **10,000 are older than 400 years**. It is to be noted here that the characteristic features of the **Sanatana temples** or the **Hindu Shrines** found in **Tamilakam** are different from the temples constructed in other parts of India as they profoundly reflect **Southern architectural styles**, use of locally available materials, and **the skills of the native people** who were definitely guided by the **learned Brahmins** well-versed with the ancient **Sanskrit texts** such as **Puranas**, **Epics**, **Shilp-shastra**, **Agama**, **Natya-shastra** etc. and were ably supported by the **Kings of three Tamil Dynasties**; **Pallavas**, **Cholas** and **Pandyas**.

The **old Brahmins** would have made the various Kings of Tamil country to believe that the construction of new temples are really important as they would leave lasting impression on the coming generations about our magnificent past and the grand structures would also cast **permanent mark** or **signature** of a **particular king** in the world. Additionally, after seeing **Sanatana characters in the physical forms**, the common people would come to know about our ancient scriptures/texts and also nucleate interest in them as these documents are otherwise **unknown** or **out of bounds** for an ordinary man of that time. In this way, these temples would give **life learning lessons** to all those who like the **Sanatana Characters** (Vedic and Puranic), and also create curiosity to know more about the **ancient shastras.** After going through the texts, some of the newly learned people would come out with the new ideas, and then strive hard to convert their **new concepts** into the **physical shapes** such as a stone or metal idol.

It is said that some **mandapams** or the halls of these temples were used for the recitation of mantras from the ancient scriptures like **Vedas** and **Upanishadas** (as a part of daily rituals); to give discourses on Ramayana and Mahabharata based stories to the gathering; to hold debate and discussion on the religious matters; and to perform Music and Dances for the royal guests.

It is also to be noted here that the monuments created by these **Great Tamil kings** have brought the ancient divine and mythical characters based on **Sanatana texts** into ***'life'*** and in practical sense, through these sculptures, they made the legendary characters **immortal** as well.

Many visitors, local merchants, foreign traders, affluent land owners upon seeing these monuments, must have lavishly praised the amazing design and creation of these splendid sculptures and appreciated the excellent work done by the **local craftsmen** who cast ***Sanskrit based mythical / Puranic ideas*** **into the moulds** or **gave them the permanent shapes**.

III. "Sanskrit Inscriptions" engraved during the medieval Kingdoms of Tamilakam:

Generally speaking, an inscription is nothing but the writing or engraving the words on a solid surface, such as hero stone, grave stone, rock pillar, temple wall, metal/copper plate, earthen brick or pot, wooden tablet, metal coin, seal, and sculpture etc.

Since the inscriptions are considered as the **frozen words** of a particular period, and hence for all practical purposes, they are treated as the **reliable textual records** to understand how the things or events have taken shape in the past. In true sense, inscriptions have become very important artefacts as they provide authentic and credible information about the historical developments that took place much earlier.

The study of these inscriptions is known as **epigraphy**, which involves analysis of the information in the proper context so as to uncover historical secrets. Inscriptions are crucial for understanding the cultural and social developments that occurred in the past.

Even before the time of **Ashoka**, when the **Jain monks** moved from the north to the south, possibly they started carving small inscriptions in Tamil on the cave beds where they stayed in the area adjoining Madurai and Tirunelveli districts. In earlier times, ancient Tamil people did not consider writing on a stone as a normal thing. For the deceased, especially those who died bravely, they planted a stone and wrote the name and honour of the deceased (also known as a ***Hero stone***). Occassionally, they wrote on some perishable materials and the pottery. Hence in Tamil Nadu, on the earthen pots, we find the oldest evidence of writing.

Grantha script developed during the **Pallavas** period was once used to write **Sanskrit** texts throughout the greater Tamil Nadu (including **Chera** kingdom of Kerala) and the South-east Asia. The word **Grantha** denotes in **Sanskrit** '***a literary work***'. Incidentally, the script used for writing the **Sanskrit** works obtained the same name. At one time, it was prevalent throughout the South India. Inadequacy of the **Tamil Brahmi** script in covering some **Sanskrit** letters/words would have led to the development of **Grantha script** during the **Pallava's** period. Some say that the **Sanskrit scholars** arrived lately from the **North India** found the **Tamil Brahmi** script being used to write **Tamil text**, does not cover all the **Sanskrit** words in use at that time. Therefore, they felt the need of creating a new script for **Sanskrit letters,** but that was purposely derived from the earlier **Brahmi script**, and named it as **Grantha** script. Till 19th century, in Tamil Nadu, **Grantha** script was being used to write **Sanskrit letters**, but now in place of old **Grantha, Devanagari** script is being used to write **Sanskrit**.

As a matter of fact, in India, **maximum numbers of inscriptions** are found in the Tamil Nadu state of India. Out of these inscriptions, a large number of them are noticed on the temple-walls of the ancient rock-cut and free-structures constructed during the medieval period by the three major dynasties of the **Tamilakam**; Pallavas, Cholas, and Pandyas. Being the spoken language of the native people, it is natural to find most of them composed in **Tamil language**.

Additionally, several copper-plate inscriptions are also observed in the regions ruled by these three well-known Tamil dynasties and then reigned by the kings/leaders/Nayakas of the Vijayanagara kingdom. Copper-plate inscriptions are not only the documents of instructions issued by a ruler or an authority for the specific administrative actions, but also provide insights into the political and religious changes that took place during a particular time period.

Considering the presence of bi-liguistic mode of communication (use of **Tamil** and **Sanskrit** languages) between the **Ruling class of Tamil Country** and the **Brahmins**, then it is obvious to have inscriptions on the stones and the copper-plates in both languages as these were in use in the courts of kings of Tamil Land. To inscribe the texts in **Sanskrit**, mostly the **Grantha script** was used and for the **native Tamil inscriptions**, two different scripts named as **Tamil Brahmi** and **Vatteluttu** were employed by the kings.

Noboru Karashima [22] in the article (published in the year 2012) has presented the data collected by Garbini (1993) and Subbarayalu (2001) on the distribution of the inscriptions in different Indian languages found in the entire country (**Table-1**) as well as the Tamil inscriptions located in the Tamil speaking regions (**Table-2**).

Table 1: **Distribution of inscriptions on the basis of language**

Language	**Number of inscriptions**
Sanskrit	7,800
Other Aryan languages	5,000
Tamil (Dravidian)	28,000
Kannada (Dravidian)	11,000
Telugu (Dravidian)	5,000
Others (Persian, Arabic, etc.)	3,000
Total-----	59,800

Table 2: Tamil Inscriptions in Tamil Villages

Period	Number of Inscriptions
3rd century BCE to 5th century CE---- --------	100
6th century to 9th century ----------	900
10th century to 13th century ----------	19,000
14th century to 16th century----------	6,000
17th century to 19th century----------	2,000
	Total --- 28,000

Source: From Garbini (1993) and Subbarayalu (2001)

Information placed in **Table- 2** tells us that a large number of Tamil inscriptions belong to the period from the 10th to the 16th centuries CE. During this period, **Tamilakam** was mostly ruled by the kings belonging to the dynasties of **Chola**, **Pandya** and **Vijayanagara** Empire.

From the data given in **Table-1** and **Table-2**, considering the scenario of the whole country, it is crystal clear that the maximum numbers of inscriptions are found Tamil Nadu state of India and that happens to be nearly 45% of the total inscriptions found in India. The maximum numbers of **Sanskrit inscriptions** are also noticed in the **Tamil Nadu** state.

It is generally believed that the engraving **Sanskrit** inscriptions in the **Grantha** script in the **Tamil Country** would have begun around **600 CE** (in the beginning of medieval period), when the **Pallava kings of Kanchipuram** permitted to engrave the texts in **Sanskrit** and **Tamil** languages, replacing earlier combination of **Prakrit** and **Sanskrit**, the two official languages that were popularly used by the **Early Pallavas** in the past [23, 24].

In the following paragraphs, we shall discuss about the **Sanskrit inscriptions** that were engraved by the **Pallavas**, **Cholas**, **Pandyas** and **Vijayanagara kings** in **Tamil Land**.

a. Sanskrit Inscriptions originated during the "Pallavas' Kingdom":

It is generally believed that the **Pallavas** who ruled the northern and central parts of Tamilakam during 550 to 870 CE, were originally from **Andhra region** as the early inscription located in Nagarjunkonda describes the grant given by their ancestors in **Prakrit** and **Sanskrit**.

Probably Pallavas when lived in **Andhra** acted as the feudatories to **Satavahanas**. Around 550 CE, when they moved to the Northern part of **Tamilakam** and firmly established themselves as the ruler of that region, and then made **Kanchipuram** as the capital of their kingdom.

Examples of Sanskrit inscriptions of Pallava Kings

- Pallava king **Mahendravarman-I** regime inscriptions engraved on the rock of the **Shikhanathaswami** temple located in **Pudukottai** mentions **musical notes** or four svaras of the **Madhyamagrama Raga**.
- In the **Mandapattu** village in the **South Arcot district**, there is a **Sanskrit inscription** on the rock-cut cave temple built during 7th century CE probably by the Pallava king **Mahendravarman-I** specifically mentions the name of king as **Vichitrachitta** (believed to be other name of the king **Mahendravarman-I**) has built this temple without using material like brick, timber, metal and mortar.
- **Chengulpataam** inscriptions issue by king **Rajasimha-II** in 8th century CE gives the list of **54 Pallava kings** who ruled earlier to him. However, the first seven names include mythological/legendary figures such as **Brahma** to **Asvatthaman** as well.
- Inscription on the **Saluvankuppam** cave of Mahabalipuram engraved during 8th century CE belonging to the era of Pallava king **Rajasimha-II** reveals the construction of **Shiva temple** by the king **Atiranchanda**.
- Inscription in Grantha script inside the wall of **Kailasanatha temple of Kanchipuram** describes several titles/Birudas awarded to Pallava king **Rajasimha-II**.

One such inscription selected for the discussion here, is found inside the **Kailasanatha temple Kanchi** that was constructed by **Pallava king Rajasimha**, but it also shows a record an event related to **Vikramaditya-II** the Chalukya king of **Vatapi/Badami**, who after capturing **Kanchi** the Pallava capital city in **742 CE**, when entered the city, was amazed by its beauty and hence did not do any damage to the existing structures of the town including **Kailasanatha temple**, but gave several gifts to the temple (***Kanchim avinaashyaiva pravishya/ काञ्चीं अविनाश्यैव प्रविश्य***). Following inscription in **Grantha script** illustrate the history. *--Narasimha varmaNa nirmita sila maya Raajasimheshvaraadi dEvakula prabuta suvarNa raashi pratyarpaNopaarjitaH puNyaH*

नरसिंहवर्मण निर्मित सिल मय राजसिंहेश्वरादि देवकुल प्रबूत सुवरण राशि प्रत्यर्पणोपार्जित पुण्यः॥

b. Sanskrit Inscriptions of the Cholas' Period:

There are more than 10,000 inscriptions engraved on stone and copper-plate during the Chola period. Majority of these inscriptions are related to the grants and donations made by Chola kings to various temples and other individuals. Some of the stone and copper-plate inscriptions contain orders issued by the rulers. Some inscriptions talk about the military expeditions, administrative instructions, gifting of land to Brahmins, and the valuables / donations to temples. In this way, from the recorded inscriptions we get to know the political, religious and social history of the **Chola period**. These inscriptions are engraved in **Sanskrit** and **Tamil languages** on the stone wall of the temples, pillars and copper-plates. Although **Tamil** was the most favourite language of the **Cholas** for inscribing the matter, still a few among them are written in **Sanskrit**.

Some of these inscriptions reflect their military achievements and some give information about the gifts given to either temples or the different people. Examples of both types of inscriptions are as under.

- **Charters issued during 1012-1042** CE **by king Rājendra-I Chola**: Copper-plate charter has two sections, one in **Sanskrit**, other one in **Tamil**. The **Sanskrit** section (5 plates) deals with the **genealogy of the Chola dynasty**, starting with a praise of **Vishnu** and the names of mythical divine ancestors (**Solar dynasty**).
- **Kanyakumari** village in Kanyakumari district inscription engraved on the cylindrical stone pillars during the regime of Chola king Vira Rajendra in the year **1070 CE**, talks about the donation of the land. Before that complete **genealogy of Chola dynasty** is given and hence it is also called as "**Chola Vansha Prashasti**". As per these inscriptions, the Cholas belong to **Iksvaku clan**, as that of Lord **Rama** the list includes many legendary characters and the family history of Cholas clan till the king **Vira Rajendra Chola**.
- **Kampaharesvar Temple of Kumbhakonam** possesses inscriptions on the wall that is engraved during the rule of Chola king **Kulathunga-III** in 12th century CE, which depicts the military achievements of the Chola king ***Tribhuvana Viradeva*** who crushed **Simhala ruler** and killed **Vira Pandya** and captured **Madurai** and performed **Vira-Abhisheka** after the victory. Additionally, inscriptions describe his contribution by adding various structures in the existing temple complexes. It further says that the Chola king built **Emkamberesva temple** in **Kanchipuram**, **Halahalasya temple** in

Madurai, and **Valmikesvara temple** in **Tiruvarur**. It also speaks about **Somesvara** the **Guru of king**.

- **Agnishvarar temple, Thiruvannamalai** inscription on mandapam engraved in the year 1057 CE.
- **Uttaramerur** inscriptions speak about the victory of **Parantaka-I** Chola over Madurai.
- **Darasuram and Cholapuram** temple inscriptions tell about attack on Chera's land.
- **Brihadisvara Temple, Tanjavur** inscriptions describe how the **Chola king Rajarja-I** executed his plan of construction the superb temple and the gifts given by his family members to the temple.

c. Sanskrit Inscriptions belonging to the Pandya Dynasty:

Among the three well-known Tamil Royal Dynasties who ruled **Tamilakam** during the medieval period, the **Pandyas** of **Madurai** are the earliest mentioned dynastic rulers whose existence have been mentioned in the **Sangam Literature** (composed during **300 BCE to 300 CE**). Their names also appears in 4th century BCE Greek writings and also said to have sent the ambassadors to Roman emperors. It is said that the kings of **Pandya Dynasty** who governed the southernmost part of **Tamilakam**, initially practiced **Jainism**, but subsequently embraced the **Shaivism**. A few **Sanskrit inscriptions** engraved during the **Pandya dynasty** are as under.

- **Sanskrit** part of the Copper-plate inscriptions recovered from **Chinnamanur** village of **Madurai district** issued in the year 741 CE during Pandya king **Rajasimha-II** glorify Pandya family in general mentioning genealogy and also informs that **sage Agastya** was their family priest. In continuation of the praise, the content of the inscription reveals that one **Pandya king** sat on the **throne of Indra**. It further states that many Pandya kings in the past performed **Rajasuya** and **Ashvamedha Yajnas**. Reference of King **Rajasimha-II** granting a village as a **Brahmadeya** is also found here.
- Three **Sanskrit verses** engraved (770 CE) at the entrance of **Narasimha Perumal temple** of **Madurai** indicate the creation of stone temple of **Vishnu** and the donation for **agraharas** given to the **learned Brahmins**.
- The **Sanskrit verse** inscription engraved on the south wall of the second prakara of the **Nataraja temple** of **Chidambaram** town, speaks about the **murder of the Kerala king by Jatavarma Sundara Pandya-I**.

Significance of Sanskrit inscription of "Velvikkudi Copper Plates"

The bilingual inscriptions (both **Sanskrit** and **Tamil**) on a set of copper-plate issued by **Pandya king Parantaka Nedunjadaiyan** (also called ***Varaguna Pandiyan*** who ruled from 768-815) around 770 CE reveals the story of the **restoration of land and privileges** to the **Brahmins** who lived in the **Pandya's country** that were probably discontinued by the **Kalbhras** when they ruled the **Tamilakam** during the period 300 to 600 CE. The inscriptions on copper-plate include the **Prasasti** (eulogy) portions written in both **Sanskri**t and **Tamil**. In the inscriptions engraved during the time of **Pallavas.** The **Prasasti** portion was written only in **Sanskrit**, while **Tamil** was used to describe the **transactional parts** [25, 26].

The inscription starts with the establishment of a mythical link of the origin of the **Pandya dynasty** with the **lunar dynasty** (king Pururavas, the son of Budh) mentioned in the Hindu legends. Pandya's genealogy is different from the Cholas' dynasty as the latter are believed to be from the **solar dynasty** as that of lord **Rama**.

Based on the information given in these inscriptions, it can be said that the kings of **Pandya dynasty** used to give **grants to the Brahmins** during the **Sangam era**. But when the **Kalbhras** brought the **Tamil Land** under their control, they discontinued the same as the **Kalbhras** (new rulers) had liking for **Buddhism** and **Jainism** and **had no love for the Brahminical Ideology**. This inscription also confirms a view, after defeating the **Kalbhras**, the **Pandyas** had regained their political supremacy that was lost to the **Kalbhras** earlier.

In reality, as per the historical records, the trend of gifting land to the **Brahmanas** was set by the **Early Pallavas** (250 to 550 CE) when the **Pallava kings** issued grants in writing (Prakrit and Sanskrit inscriptions available from Andhra region) to the members of Brahmin community on a regular basis. Some historians say that as the Pallavas claim their origin to sage **Bharadwaja** and then also link themselves to **Indra**, and hence in a true sense, they can be identified as the **Brahmin-Kshatriya** clan.

Velvikkudi Copper Plates, though belong to **Pandya's** reign, still it provides valuable information on the **end of Kalabhra's** reign as that period is considered as the **Dark Age of Tamil Country**. However, there is no authentic record on the origin and the method of governance of **Kalabhra's dynasty** who once overshadowed the three prominent dynasties of **Tamilakam**; the Early **Pandyas**, Early **Cholas** and Early **Cheras** from **300 to 600 CE**.

d. Sanskrit Education and the Literature composed during the medieval period:

In the **Royal Courts** of Later Pallavas, Cholas and Pandyas, **Sanskrit** was being used as the language of communication between the **Brahmins** and the **Ruling class** so as to transfer the knowledge on ritualistic and philosophical texts from the **religious leaders** to the **rulers**.

Pallava king **Mahendravarman-I** who reigned from 600 to 630 CE assumed several **Birudas/titles** such as Mattavilasa, Vichitrachitta, Gunabhara, Lakshita, Vidhi etc. and also composed a play called as **Mattavilasa Prahasanam** a satire. **Mattavilasa** depicts friction between the growing influence of **Shaivism** and the **Buddhism** that was flourished during the time of the **Kalbhras** earlier. **Bodhayan** who was in his court, has written **Bhagavadajjukam** a play in **Sanskrit**.

Pallava king **Rajasimha** who is also known as **Narasimhavarman-II** was a dramatist and poet and composed his work in Sanskrit based on the epics **Ramayana** and **Mahabharata**.

The two outstanding **Poets of the Pallava courts** who composed their work in **Sanskrit** are **Bharavi (Kiratarjuniya)** and **Dandin (Dashakumaracharita).**

The kings of **Chola dynasty** were the patrons of art and literature. Even though they preferred **Tamil** over **Sanskrit** in issuing the majority of inscriptions, they supported **Sanskrit education** by establishing the schools for **Vedic studies**. The **Brahmins** who enjoyed the support from the kings, performed rituals in the temples and Royal palaces, but also ran the institutes to impart educations in **Sanskrit** to their children either inside the temple complexes or in Vedic schools. **Agraharas**, **ghatikas**, **temple-colleges** and **mathas** were the main educational institutions imparting the knowledge on the **Sanskrit literature**. In many **mathas**, the **Brahmin boys** were properly taught about the sacred texts like the Vedas, Vedic sacrifices, Brahmanas, Smritis, Epics etc. Several old records show, many ***Bramhadeyas*** acted as the centres for learning and acquiring advance knowledge in **Hindu scriptures**.

There is a historical reference that manifests during the reign of **Vikrama Chola**, at the **Tiruvavaduthurai** temple complex, the students were trained specifically in the **medical field** as they were taught Vaghabhatta's *Ashtanga Hrudaya*, *Charaka Samhitha* and *Rupavatara.* At the same place, the students were also taught about other **Sanskrit texts including grammar**.

During the regime of **Vira Rajendra Chola**, at **Tirumukkudal**, near Chengalpattu, there existed a **Vedic school** and a **hostel** attached to a **hospital**. The inscription also talks about the availability of various facilities for the students who lived in the hostel.

e. Usage of Sanskrit in the names Tamil persons and places---some examples:

What is in a name? This well-known phrase belongs to **Romeo and Juliet** play written by ***William Shakespeare*** and through this statement, probably he wanted to convey that a name itself does not hold any significance, but it is the many attributes of a person or **personality as a whole** that matters the most. In the following paragraphs, we will discuss about application of **Sanskrit** in the names of places and persons of Tamil Nadu [1].

- **Late M. Karunanidhi-** the Former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu state was earlier named as **Dakshinamurthy** by his parents**.** Then he was advised by senior Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) leader (probably Late CN Anna Durai), to use the name **Karunanidhi** instead. His earlier name as well as the new name (**करुणानिधि**) that became his identity later, are definitely **Sanskrit** origin, (also names **Udayanidhi, Dayanidhi)**
- **Late M. Karunanidhi** is popularly called as ***Kalaignar***. The Tamil word ***Kalaignar*** means "**artist**" or "one who is skilled in the arts." In **Sanskrit**, the word "**Kala/कला**" stands for **art** (in English) and the term **Kalakar**/**कलाकार** means an **artist**. There exists similarity between the Tamil word ***Kalaignar*** and Sanskrit word **Kalakar**.
- Similarly, there are many names of the cities and towns of Tamil Nadu that are partly or fully originated from **Sanskrit**. A few of them are given below.

  Chidambaram- Chit+ Ambar means the **sky of consciousness** or **atmosphere of wisdom**.
  Kumbhakonam- Vedic word **Kumba** means **pot** and is found in **Rigved**.
  Ramanathapuram-name of a district in Tamil Nadu, and the Sanskrit word **Puram** used as suffix to denote a place or city or town here, does appear in **Rigved**.

Since ancient time, **Sanatana traits** have left ***inerasable marks*** in the almost all spheres of **Tamil Culture** including political and social, history, literary, architect, art, dance, etc.

As there is no evidence indicating **Sanskrit language** was forced upon the people of **Tamilakam** during the period of **Pallavas** or **Cholas** or **Pandyas** and hence it can be stated that the kings of these dynasties willingly accepted and used the ***North Indian/Aryas'*** language for engraving the inscriptions on the stonewalls of rock-cut cave temples, stand-alone temples and the copper-plates. Some Tamil kings have also composed literature in **Sanskrit** as well.

IV. Adherence to the policy of "Pluralism in faiths" by the Medieval Tamil Kings:

Dictionary meaning of the word **Pluralism** is **the existence of different types of people** within the same society**, who have non-identical beliefs and opinions**. In the context of **Indian Philosophy**, the word **Pluralism** practically means the origin and promotion of different philosophies and culture within the country since a very long period.

During the Rigvedic period also, the **Vedic people** who worshipped various Vedic Deities through **Yajna practice,** co-existed in the same North-west part of the Indian Sub-continent with the **Phallus worshippers** (see the Rigvedic verse **Rv-7.21,5** and **Rv-10.99,5** for the followers of ***Shishna-Deva***), but lived separately.

Apart from the main **Brahminical Ideology** (that is based on the **six *Astika* schools**-Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimansa and Vedanta), the ancient India is also home of the different diverse Philosophies and all of them were developed **B**efore **C**ommon **E**ra (**BCE**) and these ***Nastika* schools** are **Jainism**, **Buddhism**, **Ajivika**, **Ajnana** and **Charvakya**.

Diverse Culture is the identity of **India** and the **Indian civilization**; one of the oldest in the world that has produced varied philosophies and traditions/practices, still promoted the peaceful-coexistence of the people belonging to different sects, religions and local cultures.

Since ancient time, **plurality** has been a part and parcel of the **Indian Civilization**. The information compiled on the kings of following Indian origin key dynasties who ruled different parts of India **earlier to 800 CE** would give a better picture of the **Indian Cultural Pluralism**.

<u>Maurya Dynasty (321 BCE to 185 BCE)/ Magadha</u>

Chandragupta Maurya----handed over reign to his son **Bindusar** to become **Jain follower**.

Bindusar--- he joined **Ajivaka** sect.

Ashoka----embraced **Buddhism** after the victory in **Kalinga** war.

Dasharatha—followed **Buddhism** as he continued the tradition of his father, **Ashoka**.

Samprati-----supported **Jainism** and became the disciple of Jain monk **Suhasti Surji**.

From the above, it is apparent that different kings belonging to **Maurya Dynasty** followed different beliefs and still all of them treated as the **members of the Maurya clan**.

Shunga Dynasty (185 BCE to 75 BCE)/ Magadha

The kings of **Shunga dynasty** generally patronized **Brahminical** (Hindu) Ideology, supported **Buddhism** as well.

Satavahana Dynasty (228 BCE to 225 CE)/ Deccan

It is generally said that most of the kings of **Satavahana** clan patronized **Buddhism** as well as **Brahminism** as in some inscriptions, they claimed themselves as the **Brahmins**. They also performed **Yajnas** or **Vedic sacrifices**.

Gupta Dynasty (320 CE to 550 CE)/ Magadha

The kings of **Gupta dynasty** were the ardent believers of **Brahminism**/**Hinduism**, but they also permitted the followers of **Jains** and **Buddhists** to practice their faiths. **Nalanda University** was founded during the Gupta period around 4th century CE.

Vakataka Dynasty (250 CE to 500 CE)/ Vidarbha or Central India

The rulers of **Vakataka dynasty** patronized **Hindu** faith as they were **Brahmins**, but some of them supported **Buddhism** also.

Kadamba Dynasty, Banavasi (345 CE to 540 CE)/ Coastal Karnataka

Kadambas followed **Vedic Hinduism,** but supported **Jainism.**

Western Ganga Dynasty (350 CE to 1000 CE)/ South Karnataka

Early kings of **Western Ganga dynasty** followed **Vedic/Hindu religion,** but the later kings adopted **Jainism.**

Chalukya of Vatapi/Badami (545 CE t0 755 CE)/ North Karnataka

The kings of **Chalukya dynasty** professed faith in **Brahminism/Sanatana religion** as they worshipped Hindu gods like **Shiva** and **Vishnu,** performed Vedic rituals but encouraged **Jainism** as well.

Generally speaking, information given in the above paragraphs makes us to say that the dynasties who ruled different parts of the Indian Sub-continent during different time periods, had patronized one faith, but also **supported other faiths originated in India**. In some dynasties, the change over from one faith to other has also occurred. Therefore, is can be concluded that the **Pluralism** is an inseparable feature of the **Indian Civilization**.

Now coming to the main point of our discussion i.e. **the religious behaviour of the Tamil kings of medieval period**, the religious trends observed in other regions of India earlier (discussed above), are also noticed in the kingdoms of **medieval Tamil Country**.

Pallava Dynasty (575 CE to 897 CE)

Pallava king **Mahendravarman-I**, the son of **Simhavishnu,** was earlier the believer of **Jainism**, subsequently became the devotee of **Lord Shiva** after coming in contact with the Shaivate saints. That is why, afterwards, he became intolerant towards **Jain faith** and did not support the **Jain monks**. He constructed rock-cut monuments dedicated to **Shiva**. Some say that the Pallavas were originally **Brahmins** and most of them were devotee of **Shiva**.

Majority of the Pallava kings including **Narasimhavarman-I, Narasimhavarman-II; Nandivarman-I** were the followers of **Shiva** and **Vishnu** as they constructed many temples devoted to both **Sanatana Gods**. However, during the Pallava regime, **Buddhism** and **Jainism** were active and there were monasteries dedicated to these religions in the kingdom of Pallavas.

Xuanzang/Hiuen-Tsang, a Chinese traveller visited **Kanchi** the capital city of **Pallava** in the seventh century, has recorded the city known for the teaching centre of **Buddhism**.

Chola Dynasty (850 CE to 1280 CE)

The kings of the **Imperial Chola dynasty** were the fervent believers of Lord **Shiva** and hence can be termed as the followers of **Shaivate sect** of Vedic religion. During their reigns, Vedic religion was a very organized religion. It seems that, they did not pay much attention to **Astika** and **Nastika** schools of Vedic thought so as to remain aloof from the controversies.

However, Chola emperor **Parantaka-I** was the follower **Vishnu**. Hence it can be said that the faith of the empire was mainly decided by the personal choice of the king who ruled at that particular time.

But the fact is, majority of the kings did not bother about day-to-day religious affairs as most of the time, they were busy in planning and execution of the new military campaigns. Of course, whenever they found time, they would have conducted debates and discussion on the religious matters with the eagerness to know more about the philosophical developments

occurring in and around their kingdoms. Please note that as per the inscription, the Cholas were linked to **Solar Dynasty** of the North, means the descendants of **Raghu-vamsha** (Lord **Rama**).

Although the **Cholas** are always identified as **Shaivates**, still they constructed many **Vishnu** temples means, gave grants to the shrines of other **Sanatana Deities** as well including **Ranganatha temple, Sri Rangam**. It means that, most of the kings did not have problem with the devotees of **Vishnu**. The great **Vaishnavate** saint **Ramanujacharya** was the contemporary of **Vikrama Chola** and **Kulothunga-II Chola**.

Bhakti-movement started in the early seventh century, when became the temple-based, then like the late Pallava kings, the Cholas too got involved in the constructions of new **Shiva** and **Vishnu** temples and gave grants to carry out expansion/renovation of the old ones.

Pandya Dynasty (600 CE to 1300 CE)

As per the ancient Sangam literature, **Pandya** is the oldest dynasty who ruled the Southern-most part of the **Tamilakam** at least from 3rd century BCE to 3rd century CE as the history reconstructed from the **Sangam Poems** informs us the same. As compared to other Tamil rulers, the **Pandyas** ruled the South Tamil country for several centuries with some breaks here and there.

During the period 300 CE to 600 CE, when the **Kalabhras** ruled the **Tamil Country**, the early history of **Pandya dynasty** and the **Sangam literature** was almost forgotten. As mentioned in the ancient literature and the inscriptions recovered from the various locations, till the 7th century CE, the kings of **Pandya clan** followed **Jainism**.

However, in the 8th century, when a Pandya king **Kun Pandya** was convinced by a Shaivate saint, the former accepted lord **Shiva** as his prime deity. Subsequent **Pandya kings** followed **Vedic practices** and **performed Yajnas**. During the period 1280 CE to 1334 CE, as the rulers of **Pandya dynasty** became powerful and at that time, they constructed around 150 temples in different locations and also expanded several old temples.

Even though the **Pandyas** are generally treated as the **Shaivates**, still they constructed many temples of god **Vishnu** and also gave the grants and endowments for the renovations of old temples existed all over Tamil Country. As per the inscription, the **Madurai Pandyas** are connected with the **Lunar Dynasty** (**Lord Krishna**).

Jainism and Buddhism in Tamilakam during the medieval period

Jainism and **Buddhism** were the religions evolved around **6th century BCE**, opposing earlier Brahminism/Vedic Religion, offering alternative paths to spiritual liberation but different from the old Vedic tradition,

There is enough evidence in **Sangam literature** indicating **Jainism** and **Buddhism** were patronized by the **Early Pandyas**, the **Cholas** and the **Cheras**; the three ancient kingdoms of Tamil country. But these two religions left the permanent mark on the South Indian soil when both were patronized by the **Kalabhras** who ruled the **Tamilakam** during the period **300 CE to 600 CE**. It is generally believed that the **kings of Kalabhras** dynasty strongly opposed the **Brahminical ideology** and hence they whole-heartedly supported **Jainism** and **Buddhism** during their tenure. Considering the fact that the **Five Tamil Epics** were written either by the **Buddhist** or **Jain** authors during 300 CE to 800 CE, then it can assumed that both **Jainism** and **Buddhism** prospered even before the start of medieval period (500 CE to 1500 CE).

Although exact date of the entry of **Jainism** in **Tamil Land** is not known, but the **Sangam literature** conveys us that it was existing in **Tamilakam** at least as early as the **Sangam period**. Hence most of the historians are of the opinion that it would have come to South in the last phase of **4th century BCE** along with the Maurya king **Chandragupta** who moved to Karnataka after becoming a **Jain monk**. Hence it would not be a wrong thing to say that **Jainism** flourished in **Tamil Nadu** from 1st century BCE to 10th century CE.

Jain religion had influenced the Noble people of Tamil land country from 1st century BCE to 10th century CE. The earliest historical record in the form of **Jain idols** is found as **Kalugumalai Jain Beds** wherein many rock relief sculptures and 98 inscriptions dated to the 8th century including a rock-cut image of Jain God **Tirthankara Parshvanatha** and the images of other **Thirthankaras** are engraved during the reign of **Pandya** king **Parantaka Nedunjadaiyan** (768-800 CE).

Sittanavasal is another important place that served as a monastery earlier. It is a small village in **Pudukkottai** district of Tamil Nadu where the **Jainism** flourished from 1st century CE to 10th century CE. This is based on the evidence found in the form of rock-cut cave temple dedicated to the **Arihants** constructed during 7th centuries under the **Pandya dynasty**. The place is famous for the **mural paintings of Pandya period**. An inscription on the wall attributes the temple's renovation to a Pandyan king, possibly Maran Sendan (654–670 AD) or **Arikesari Maravarman** (670–700 AD).

In Tamil Land, **Buddhism** landed in the 2nd century BCE, possibly during the period of **Sangam literature** but after the arrival of **Jainism**. In the **post-Sangam** epic **Manimekalai**, the author **Sitalai satttanar** has talked about various aspects of **Buddhism** in detail. It means to say that after the **Sangam period**, probably during the **Kalabhras** reign, **Buddhism** prospered in **Tamilakam**. It is said that, the **earlier Pallava kings** were the feudatories of the **Satavahanas** who were the great patrons of **Buddhism** in **Andhra**. Hence **Buddhism** was known to the **Early Pallavas**. Probably some of the Early Pallava rulers like **Asokavarman**, **Buddhavarman** and **Buddhyankura** were **Buddhists** as indicated by their names and the others followed mainly the **Vedic Dharma** though they continued to patronize **Buddhism**.

During the medieval period, both **Jainism** and **Buddhism** were active in Tamil land. But **Buddhism** and **Jainism** mostly appealed to the Tamil rulers, merchants and aristocrats.

In ancient Tamil Nadu, the **Jain monks** preferred to live in the caves. Inscriptions at Meenakshipuram near Madurai, Chitthanna Vasal near Pudukottai and Buklur in Tirichirapalli district speak about the story of making beds for the Jain sages. In Southern part of Tamilakam, Jain religion grew during **Pandya king Parantaka Viranarayana's** (also known as Jatila Parantaka Nedunjadayan who was devotee of **Shiva** as he constructed many **Shiva** temples at different places and also supported **Bhakti movement**) rule during the medieval period as he extended political support to the **Jain monks**. Written records of his time found at Aivarmalai, Anaimalai, Kalugumalai and Eruvadi tell us about the establishment of **Jain monasteries** in these places. Tamil Literature composed during the 7th to 10th centuries CE illustrate the cordial and collaborative relations between the **Jain** and **Hindu societies** in the Tamil region.

Some Famous Religious and Trade Centres in medieval Tamil Country

Kanchipuram: **Kanchipuram** enjoys a unique place among the ancient Indian cities, as all four major religious schools originated in India like **Buddhism**, **Jainism**, **Shaivism** and **Vaishnavism** got patronage from the rulers of this ancient city of Tamil Nadu. **Hiuen Tsang** was a Buddhist Monk from China who visited **Kanchipuram** during the rule of **Pallava** in the 7th century CE, which he recorded as a powerful Buddhist base as the city had number of Buddhist shrines and structures. During his visit, he noted the presence of a large number of the **Buddhist and Jain** followers in the city. This proves that though the **Pallava kings** were the worshippers **Shiva** and **Vishnu**, they were tolerant of **Buddhism** and **Jainism** too, but both

faiths were on decline during the last phase of Pallava's reign. There is **8th CE Pallava period Jain temples** near Kanchipuram at **Tiruparukundram**.

Nagapattanam: The major port city of Tamil country was once a **Buddhist** centre of learning during the **Pallava** and **Chola** periods where about **350 Buddha** statues have been excavated. The Chola king promoted the **Buddha vihara** at N**agapattanam** that has been recorded in the copper-plate inscription. The Pallava king, **Nandivarman II** (731-796 CE) constructed a **Buddhist vihara** (known as China vihara) at **Nagapattinam** for the use of Chinese mariners who came over there for the purpose of trade. Chola king **Rajaraja-I** is said to have encouraged the South-eastern ruler of **Sri Vijaya** to build a Buddhist Vihara at **Nagapattanam**. This vihara was called '**Chudamani Vihara**'. In other words, Buddhism had profound influence on the lives of the people of the ancient coastal region of Tamil Nadu.

Kaveripattanam: It is the ancient prominent port city located at the mouth of river Kaveri and at the time of **Early Cholas** (before 500 CE), it was known as **Puhar** or **Pumpuhar**. It is also mentioned in the famous ancient Tamil epics **Silapattikaram** and **Manimekalai**. The ruins of ancient **Buddhist monastery** and **Buddhapada** (footprint of the Buddha) are found in the city. It was the major trade centre as merchandise arrived from overseas, brought the items like horses from distant. Both **Brahminical** and **Buddhist** cultures co-existed in the port city.

Starting with **period earlier** to **Sangam**, but with the entry of **Brahmanical scriptures** like Vedas, Upanishadas, legends, Epics etc.; then extreme ascetic practices of **Jainism** and the thought provoking ideology of **Buddhism**; then passionately moving forward with the **Bhakti movement** during the **medieval period**; the rulers/people of **Tamilakam** did create and cultivate an environment of involvement where the spiritualism attained a new height. As the path of religious journey was not straight, the old **Tamilians** had to negotiate several ups and downs in the form of varied ideas, rituals and practices to reach the present stage.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the **Tamil Culture** has its rich history and diversity, but its customs and traditions are very similar to **Indian Culture** as it has also been shaped by the **philosophies of different religious faiths specifically born in India**.

Once the **Bhakti movement** gathered the momentum, the saints of **Vaishnava** and **Shaiva** sects composed several devotional songs in **Tamil** that attracted attention of all.

V. Missing "Tamil Spirit" between the 14th to 17th centuries of Common Era (CE):

In the early part of 13th century, with the resurgence of **Pandya Dynasty** under the leadership of **Maravarman Sundara Pandyan,** the **Chola Empire** steadily began to decline.

Jatavarman Sundara Pandiyan who succeeded **Maravarman Sundara Pandyan** was the brave and ambitious king, slowly crushed the **Cholas** completely and became the controlling authority of the **Tamilakam**.

In **1308 CE**, the **South Indian** history took a dramatic turn when **Alauddin Khilji** the head of **Delhi Sultanate** sent his general **Malik Kafur** for the South India expedition. Kafur started his complain by reconquering **Yadava's kingdom of Devagiri**. Then with the help of **Ramachandra, the king of Devagiri,** in **1309**, he attacked the kingdom of **Kakatiya dynasty** and ransacked its capital **Warangal**. Again in early **1311** CE, **Kafur** came back to south to defeat the **Hoysala king Ballala** of Karnataka first, and then with the help of the latter, invaded **Pandya's** capital city **Madurai** with the intention to loot the treasure, horses and elephants. After spending about eight months of the year **1311** in south, **Malik Kafur** collected a large amount of wealth from **Hoysala** and **Pandya kingdom**s and then returned to Delhi. In this way, the **Khilji Dynasty of Delhi** destroyed the independent ruling capacity of the Deccan and South Indian Kingdoms in the beginning of the 14 century itself.

It is very strange but fact that for **about four centuries**, the **warrior dynasties from the Tamilakam** did very little to show their **velour** and **military strength** to the **Outsiders** as their ancestors did in the past. Same thing has been discussed in the following paragraphs.

a. <u>Madurai Sultanate in Tamilakam</u>

In the year **1316 CE**, **Alauddin Khilji** died in Delhi due to illness, and within the four years of his death, **Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq** took over the throne of Delhi.

Madurai Sultanate was established by a Muslim governor **Jalaluddin Ahsan Khan** in the year **1335 CE** after declaring independence from the **Delhi Sultanate** that was ruled by **Muhammad bin Tughluq** of the **Tughlaq** dynasty. It was also called as **Malabar Sultanate** that included Madurai, Tiruchirappalli and Cuddalore and Villupuram districts of present-day Tamil Nadu state. It lasted for about 43 years (up to 1378 CE), till it was captured by the Military commander of **Vijayanagara Empire** [27].

Ibn Battuta, the **Moroccan Muslim explorer** visited the **Madurai Sultanate** in the year 1344 and married the daughter of Sultan and hence witnessed and noted the several incidences happened during the rule of his Father-in-law. In his chronicle ***Rhila***, he has accounted the atrocities committed by the Muslim ruler against the people of **Tamilakam**.

In the year **1378 CE**, after the death of **Ala-ud-Din Sikandar Shah** the last Sultan, who was killed in the battle against the **Vijayanagara army** (led by **Kumara Kampana?),** the regime of **Madurai Sultanate** came to an end**.**

b. Vijayanagara Rule in the Tamil Territory

As mentioned earlier, since the beginning of 14th century, South Indian kingdoms were repeatedly attacked by the Delhi Sultanate, and they were forced to become feudatories of the different dynasties that ruled Delhi. The founder of **Madurai Sultanate** was the servant of **Delhi Muslim ruler** who got settled in **Madurai**. At the time of **Madurai Sultanate**, the Hindu Population of South India was living under the constant fear as the Muslim rulers who forcibly implemented their customs and imposed several taxes on them.

In 1336 CE, the two brothers **Harihara I** and **Bukka Raya I** established **Vijayanagara** empire in the **Deccan region of India**. It is named after its capital city **Vijayanagara** presently known as **Hampi** located in the **Karnataka** state of India. For about 200 years, **Vijayanagara** Empire dominated the **Southern India** [28].

Kumara Kampana was the son of **Bukka I**, the second ruler of the first **Vijayanagara** dynasty began his southern campaign by capturing the northern part of present-day Tamil Nadu defeating the king of **Shambuvaraya family** and then marched towards **Tanjavur/central Tamil Nadu** and then moved to **Madurai**. Finally, in the year 1378 CE, **Vijayanagara** army conquered **Madurai** ending more than four decades of Muslim rule in the region.

Ganga Devi the wife of **Kumara Kampana** composed a long poem in **Sanskrit** known as **Madura-Vijayam** (**मधुराविजयम्)** in which she has described pathetic condition of the Hindus lived under the regime of **Madurai Sultanate**. As per the content of poem, the **Goddess of Madurai** appeared in the dream of **Kumara Kampana** and told him to take necessary action against the Sultan to restore the **Dharma** there. Therefore, he is seen as the protector of **Hindu religion in South**. After the victory, **Kumara Kampana** ruled the **Tamilakam** as the viceroy of **Vijayanagara Empire** who restored religious practices and brought peace in the region.

Kumara Kampana was not only a great warrior but also an efficient administrator. He improved the conditions of the temples of Tamil Nadu and donated lands and wealth to them.

Tamilakam after the fall of Vijayanagara Empire

As per the historical records, the kings belonging to **four different dynasties** namely, **Sangama**, **Saluva**, **Tuluva** and **Aravidu** ruled the **Vijayanagara Empire** from **1336 to 1646 CE**. Among them, the rulers of **Sangama** and **Tuluva** dynasties created lasting impression on the history of South India [29].

In Tamil Nadu, **Krishna Deva Raya** (1509-1529) who belonged to **Tulava dynasty**, introduced **Nayakaship** in many important places including **Vellor**, **Ginjee**, **Tanjavur** and **Madurai** etc. **Nayaka** was the title given by the king to a **Military Governor**. It is said that, once there were about **100 Nayakas** in the entire **Vijayanagara Empire** to look after the military and administrative activities of the different sub-areas. During the rule of the **Vijayanagara** kings, as the local rulers started patronizing **Kannada** and **Telugu** languages over **Tami**l language, there was a steady decline of use of **Tamil** in the courts of **Nayakas**. Some say that the kings of **Vijayanagara Empire** patronized the **caste system** in old **Tamil Nadu** state based on the concept of ***Varnashrama***.

After the loss of **Talikotta** battle (in 1565 CE) and subsequent to the downfall of **Vijayanagara** Empire, many **Nayakas/local rulers** declared themselves as the **independent rulers** of that particular region. **For example**: from **1529** to **1736 CE, Madurai** was ruled by more than **10 different Nayakas**. It means, for nearly 200 years, the ancient **Pandyas kingdom** was under the control of different **Telugu rulers**.

Similarly, **Tanjavur Nayakas** independently ruled the **central part of Tamilakam** located around the **Kaveri** river basin including the major temple towns like **Tanjavur**, **Tirichirapalli**, **Kumbhakonam**, **Chidambaram** etc.

On many occasions, the **Nayakas** while **ruling different parts of Tamil Country** fought against each other to show supremacy. However, the **Nayakas** reconstructed many damaged temples and added a few more. Therefore, it can be said that under the reigns of **Nayaka**s, in **Tamil Nadu**, the temple constructions attained the rapid growth. In general, the **Nayakas** encouraged the arts, architecture, and literature that has left behind a rich cultural legacy. The **Nayakas** also patronized the literature in **Telugu**, **Tamil** and **Sanskrit** languages.

c. Tanjavur/Tanjore under the Maratha Rulers

Tanjavur region, the Kaveri river delta once ruled by **Chola dynasty** for about four centuries, but in the early fourteen century, came under the rule of **Delhi Sultanate** for a short period. When the **Vijayanagara** king in the late fourteenth century, brought the entire **Tamil Nadu** under his control, then **Tanjavur** (earlier **Tanjore**) region became part of his kingdom. As discussed earlier, since the time of **Krishna Deva Raya**, **Tanjavur** was ruled by the **Telugu speaking Nayakas**. The **Nayakas** ruled the **Tanjavur country** from 1540 to 1673 CE. In 1673, the rule of the **Tanjavur Nayakas** came to an end, when **Chokkanatha Nayaka**, the ruler of **Madurai**, invaded **Tanjavur** and **killed its local ruler, Vijayaraghava.**

When Madurai Nayaka positioned his brother **Alagiri** on the throne of **Tanjavur**, then the ex-minister **Rayasam Venkanna** with the help of **Sultan of Bijapur**, reinstated **Chengamaladha** the son of **Vijayaraghava** on the throne of **Tanjavur** for some time. To do so, **Sultan of Bijapur** had to send his army whose commander was **Venkoji** (**Ekoji**) the son of **Shahaji Bhosale**, and the half brother of **Shivaji**. **Venkoji** conquered **Tanjavur** region, but after sometime, declared himself as the new king of **Tanjavur** as he occupied the throne in the year **1675**. In this way, **Marathi speaking Bhosale dynasty** made entry into the core area of **Tamilakam**. In true sense, the internal conflict between the **Madurai** and **Tanjavur Nayakas** led the **Tanjavur country** going into the hands of **Marathas**.

Since beginning, (from 1675 to 1855 CE) the **Maratha rulers** strove hard to maintain separate identity for themselves as the **Tamil country** was new to them and the region under their control was surrounded by various **Hindu** and **Muslim** rulers.

Various kings of **Maratha** dynasty patronized production of literature in four language; **Tamil** (the language of **local people**), **Telugu** (the language of **Nayaka** rulers), **Sanskrit** (the language of **Sanatana scriptures**) and **Marathi** (the mother tongue of **Maratha** Rulers).

The **Tanjavur Marathas** contributed significantly to the **cultural landscape of Tamil Land**. They were the patrons of classical music, dance, and temple architecture. Famous **Saraswati Mahal Library** of **Tanjavur** was established by king **Serfoji II**, which houses a vast collection of **manuscripts written** in **Tamil**, **Telugu**, **Marathi** and **Sanskrit**, and is one of the oldest libraries in India.

Though the history of **Tanjavur paintings** begins with the sixteenth century, but it reached its golden phase in the 17th century when the **Maratha** ruler **Serfoji II** was the king.

d. Northern part of Tamil Nadu under the Carnatic Sultanate

After the complete collapse of **Vijayanagara Empire** in 1646, one-by-one the Nayakas themselves declared the kings of the regions like **Kanchi**, **Tanjavur**, **Madurai**, and **Vellor** etc. but soon these rulers became the tributaries to the **Sultans of Golkonda** and **Bijapur**. Mughal emperor **Aurangazeb** sent his commander **Zulfikar Khan** for annexing **Golkonda** and **Bijapur** Sultanates, and also attacked **Marathas of Tanjavur** and **Nayakas of Tirichirapalli** and compelled them to pay tributes. After the victory over **Golkonda** and **Bijapur Sultanates**, **Aurangzeb** nominated **two Nababs** to look after the territories of **Hyderabad, Southern** part of present-day **Andhra Pradesh** and the Northern area of **Tamil Nadu** as the **Carnatic Province** (subhah) whose seat was at **Arcot**. However, after some time, upon the decline of the Mughal Empire, theses **Nababs** declared independence from the Mughals (probably after the death of Mughal king **Aurangazeb** in 1707) and ruled these territories independently.

The **Carnatic Sultanate**, a **South Indian Province** that was ruled by the **dynasty of local Nababs (1692 to 1855)** from the town **Arcot**, but legally the region was under the jurisdiction the **Nizam of Hyderabad**. The **Nabab of Arcot** helped the **British** during wars and other conflicts. The **Nababs** were known for their patronage of the arts and their lavish lifestyles. They built grand palaces, mosques, and gardens, and supported the construction of temples and other public buildings.

In 1825 CE, the British regime brought **Arcot** under its control and in 1855 CE the **Carnatic Sultanate/state** was officially dissolved by the Englishmen.

e. Tamil Land under the British Rule

In the year 1642, with the permission of local ruler, **East India Company** opened its trading post in the village **Madraspattanam** (now known as Chennai) located on the east coast. The original purpose of **East India Company** to sell the goods produced in England in the Indian market. Initially, the company started sourcing raw materials like cotton, wood, spices, leather, and grains from the various parts of India. Then the British merchants monopolised local markets with the foreign goods and slowly India became the importer of the British goods.

In South India, by 1640, many European trading companies like **Dutch**, **French**, and **British** in the name of business interest, started settling down in the form of small colonies.

After the victory in the **Plassy war** (1756), the **East India Company** became more ambitious and began spreading its tentacles in all directions. After smelling victories in the major wars with the **Mysore rulers**, **Hyder Ali** and **Tipu Sultan** (1766 to 1799), and the **Anglo-Maratha** wars (1772 and 1818), except the North-west region of Indian Sub-continent, almost all Indian Princely States came under the control of the British Army, including **Tamil Nadu**.

Christian missionaries who accompanied with the English traders, wanted to convert the local people to their faith, and having seen caste based discrimination/division in the Hindu Society, in 1717 CE, they established a school for all caste and religion people in **Caddalore** in the Madras Presidency. Subsequently, more number of schools were opened in the different parts of Tamil country that resulted in reduction in illiteracy among the **poor native people**.

In 1838, when **Lord Elephisten** was the **Governor of Madras Presidency**, during his regime, upon request from some Englishmen, he permitted to open a few Colleges and Institutions to impart **higher education to the Tamil speaking people**.

Subsequently, based on the **Wood's report** (1854), the **British Government** established **three Universities in India**, one each at **Madras**, **Bombay** and **Culcatta**.

In summarisation, during the period of 1300 to 1800 CE, by and large, the **native peopl**e or the **speakers of the historical Tamil language** would have played **secondary role** in **Tamilakam** under the **foreign rulers** who spoke **other than Tamil language**, like the **Nayakas** of Vijaya- Nagara kingdom or the **Marathas** or the S**ultanates** (Muslim rulers) who had established their rules in the **different parts of ancient Tamil Speaking country**.

In other words, as far as the **original occupants** of **Tamil Territory** are concerned, considering the **glorious past of Tamil culture**, the historical developments that occurred during the period **1300 to 1800 CE**, appear to be the **"Dark Phase for the Tamil People".**

In short, starting with the **Madurai Sultanate**, and after its fall also, there was **no single Capable Tamil chieftain** who could lead from the front to show **his mettle** to the **Outsiders**.

Present generation of **Tamil Speaking People** should be grateful to the **Kings of Vijayanagara** for early termination of the rule **Madurai Sultanate** within the fifty years that brought the end of persecution of the people at the hands of **Islamic rulers**. Had the **Madurai Sultanate** continued its reign for another three centuries, then there would have been similar situation as happened in the parts of **North Kerala** during the reign of **Tipu Sultan**.

VI: Tamil Rulers carried "Sanatana traits" to the South-east Asia, but left limited impact of the "Tamil Culture" on the neighbouring country Sri Lanka:

Since ancient time, the people from the Indian Sub-continent had developed business and cultural contacts with the **South-Asian people**. **South-east Asia** is a region in the Asia continent that is located south of China, east of India, and north of Australia. The monsoon winds shaped the trading patterns, helping South-east Asia region to become the vital part of international trade routes culminating in the establishment of more trading centres/ports.

The traders from present-day states like Gujarat, ancient Kalinga (Odisha), Bengal, Andhra and Tamil Nadu had been selling their goods in the South-Asian countries since early 1st century CE. These frequent maritime trade interactions resulted in the extensive cultural exchanges and eventually led to an impact of Indian culture on the local cultures of Southeast Asia. In other words, along with the exchange of goods, the flow of ideas, beliefs and practices from ancient India to South-Asian countries facilitated the creation of composite culture in the South-Asian region. Indian traders established trading centres in ports like Funan (present-day Cambodia), Srivijaya (Sumatra) etc. The trade network accelerated the exchange of goods such as spices, textiles, and precious stones, enriching both Indian and Southeast Asian societies. ***Sanskrit inscriptions*** found in Cambodia attest to the acceptance of Indian languages and scripts, implying influence of the Indian culture on the ruling class and intellectuals.

The archaeological evidence indicates that the Indian merchants, priests/monks and kings played key role in the expansion of Indian culture in many South-east Asian countries such as present-day Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia etc.

Indian settlement in South-east Asia is documented from as early as the 3rd century BCE. The Sanskrit derived names/terms like **Champa** (Vietnam), **Kambhoja** (Cambodia), **Suvaranbhumi** (Funan), **Yava-dvipa** (Java, Sumatra, Bali etc.), and **Malaya-dvipa** manifest the influence of **Vedic language** on the culture of these countries since early centuries.

<u>Notable features of the "Indian Influence on the South-east Asian Countries"</u>

- During 4th–6th century CE, **Funan kingdom** of **South Cambodia** and **Vietnam** was controlled by the Rulers who had faith in **Hinduism**. In other words, mostly due to the trade and commerce contacts, this region had become **Indianised** a long ago.

- The worship of **Shiva** or **Nataraja** in Cambodia goes back to early 7th century CE.
- India shares a unique relationship with **South-east Asian culture** that has been shaped and reshaped by the numerous historical developments.
- South-east Asian countries have many structures and monuments that depict **Indian influence** on the art and architecture of these nations.
- **Angkor Vat temple complex of Cambodia** houses the **largest Hindu temple** in the world.
- Stupa at Borobudur (Java) implies the influence of Buddhism in medieval Indonesia.
- In some parts of South-east Asia, **Hindu** and **Mahayana Buddhist** culture coexisted for some time.
- Some of the South-east Asian rulers were treated as the incarnations of Hindu Gods.
- Local versions of Indian epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata are widely popular in South-east Asian nations. Seri Ram in Malaysia and Ramekin in Thai/Cambodia are the localized version of Hindu epic **Ramayana**.
- Indian family values, norms, rituals and traditions are still followed in some of the societies of Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia.
- Many Sanskrit inscriptions and writings have been found in places/nations like Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Bali clearly demonstrate direct Indian influence.
- Indian epics and legends are very popular in many South-east Asian countries. Indian serials like Suryaputra Karna, Mahabharata, and Ramayana are shown on the TV channels after giving subtitles into the local languages.
- Cambodian king **Khmer** (founder of Angkor) and his descendants are credited for promoting the Indian culture to South-east Asia between 8th and 13th century.
- The Khmer people adapted Indian writing, mathematics, architecture, and art.
- Some early kings of Cambodia had Sanskrit/Sanatana names, such as Rudravarman, Bhavavarman, or Jayavarman. The suffix '**varman**' denotes **Kshatriya** clan.
- Many People from South-east Asia visited India as **pilgrims** or **students**.
- The excavation of several images of Vishnu, Shiva, and the Buddha in Cambodia reflects strong Indian influence on the Khmer culture earlier to 1400 CE.
- Scenes from the **Ramayana** are carved on the walls of the **Prambanan temple** near Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia. This temple complex has shrines dedicated to Hindu Gods **Brahma** and **Vishnu**, even though the main deity is Lord **Shiva**.

- **Hindu legendary stories** are also depicted through the **performing arts** throughout the South-east Asia.
- Sanskritized names of persons are still being used by many Muslims of **Indonesia**.
- Brahminical rituals are still being followed during the coronation ceremony held for a new king in **Thailand**.
- In the puppet shows of Indonesia, the stories from **Hindu mythology** are presented.
- In the Muslim countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, some Muslim families still follow the Indian customs and rituals, especially during the marriage ceremonies, festivals etc. that definitely exhibit the lasting influence of Indian culture.

The most remarkable aspect of the influence of **Vedic culture** on the South-east Asian population is the discovery of **Sanskrit inscription** in **Grantha Brahmi** script in the **Vo Canh** village of present-day **Vietnam** belonging to 4rd or 5th century CE. The damaged inscription begins with an invocation to Lord **Shiva** and mentions Bhimagupta and his son Devagupta likely of Lichhavi dynasty. This is considered as **one of the oldest Sanskrit inscription** found in the South-east Asia. Many researchers connect this inscription with **Gupta period**.

Bhadravarman-I the son or grandson of **Fan Fo** was the king of **Champa/Vietnam** region from 380 to 413 CE. The suffix '**varman**' is commonly found in the names of the kings belonging to **Pallava dynasty**. It is said the **Bhadravarman** was well-versed with four Vedas who invited the learned Brahmins from India to settle in ancient **Champa** country.

Based on the above information, it can be assumed that the traditional scripts found in South-east Asian countries like Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia and Indonesian would have been derived from the **Grantha** script developed in India from the original **Brahmi** script during the time of **Early Pallava dynasty** (3rd Century to 5th Century CE).

Here the most intriguing question is, **"**how did **Pallava Grantha script** reach the remote and relatively unknown place like **Vo Canh town located in Vietnam?"**

Please note that the earliest known inscriptions of the **Pallava dynasty** are in **Sanskrit** and **Prakrit** written in **Early Pallava script**. The **Grantha script** which was specifically developed to write **Sanskrit** matter, was evolved from **Brahmi script**, may be traced back to the 4th century CE. The **Sanskrit** inscriptions are found not only in several parts of Southern India, but also in the other South-east Asian countries like Champa, Cambodia, Indonesia and Myanmar. It is also said that the **Grantha script** is based on the **Early Pallava script**, which

spread across South-east Asia and influenced the written languages in other cultures. The oldest inscription in the **Khmer script** that has been found in Cambodia dates back to 611 CE.

Therefore, it can be inferred that the rulers from South-east Asia would have imported script and many cultural aspects from the **East Coast part of India** as early as **400 CE**.

Several languages of the Indonesian peninsula such as **Javane**se, **Balinese** and **Sundanese** used scripts during the medieval period that evolved from the **Pallava script**. The oldest surviving Javanese inscription dates back to 760 CE [30].

In other words, the **Pallava dynasty of Kanchi** (who earlier lived in **Andhra,** acted as **Kshatriyas/warriors,** but traced their ancestry to Sage **Bharadwaja /a Brahmin**) would have developed trade and cultural contacts in the early 400 CE through the sea route with South-east Asia that resulted in spreading of **Indian culture** and the **Grantha script** evolved in their kingdom originally from the **Ashoka time Brahmi script**. **Mahabalipuram**, a port city developed by **Pallavas** might have served as the important centre for trade, enhancing interactions with the South-east Asian countries. It is to be noted here that **Prayag-raj prashasti** (Allahabad) pillar **Sanskrit** inscription of **Samudragupta's period** (4th century CE) specifically mentions **Vishnugopa of Kanchi** as the ruler. It means to say that **Pallava's Kanchi** of ancient time was known to **Gupta king** who ruled from **Pataliputra**/**Magadha**.

4th century **Cidanghiang inscription** in two lines mentions a king named Purnawarman, who used the title ***Vikranta***, which indicates that he was a worshiper of Lord **Vishnu**.

5th century **Tugu inscription** found in **North Jakarta of Indonesia** is written in **Early Pallava script**, but arranged in the form of **Sanskrit Shloka**. The inscription contains information about the irrigation and water drainage project on the local rivers planned during the king **Purnawarman**.

The **Kelurak inscription** dated 782 CE written in **Sanskrit** with **Pranagari** script, discovered in the **Buddhist temple** in Kelurak village of **Java**. Mention of Hindu gods Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha in the **Buddhist** temple signifies the **Vajrayana Buddhism** influence.

Please bear in mind that "**Suvarnbhumi/सुवर्णभूमि**" term inscribed in '**Sanskrit**' found on a 7th century stone slab in **Cambodia**.

Above exercise has been done to bring out the fact that since early 4th century CE, the **Pallavas** had regular contacts with the South-east Asian countries and that is why the script developed in their kingdom made its way to these countries along with the doctrines of **Hinduism** and **Buddhism**. After sometime, scripts for other local languages too were developed from the **Pallava Grantha** Script.

References of Sanskrit, Hinduism and Buddhism in Java/Indonesia

Historians say that the **Sanjaya dynasty** who ruled from the **central Java** was **Shaivate** means Hindus, came into power in 732 CE. As per the **Canggal inscription** issued by King **Sanjaya** dated 732, written in **Sanskrit** using the **Pallava script** mentions a **linga** (a symbol of **Shiva**) was erected on the hill by the king of **Mataram Kingdom. Prambanan** is the largest Hindu temple in Indonesia, built around 850 CE probably by the **Sanjaya** dynasty.

Shailendra dynasty, which arose in **Java** (Indonesia) during the 8th Century (precisely 778 CE), was strongly influenced by **Indian culture** and played a significant role in the cultural revival of the region. **Shailendra** (also spelled ***Sailendra***) is a derivative of the combined **Sanskrit words** of '**Shaila**' and '**Indra**' meaning "**King of the Mountain**". As a strong propagator of **Mahayana Buddhism** since beginning, the **Shailendras** built **Buddhist** monuments across Central Java. One of the monuments is the famous **gigantic stupa** of **Borobudur**, one of the most popular places of **Java** for both pilgrims and tourists today.

The **Kalasan inscription** is an inscription dated 778 CE written in **Sanskrit** with **Pranagari** script (Northern Indian script and not Pallava script) discovered in **Indonesia** that mentions the dynastic name of **Shailendra** as **Shailendravamsa.**

Some say that **Sanjaya** and **Shailendra** dynasties of **Java** belong to the same group of people/family, but purposely followed different faiths, like **Sanjayas** worshipped God **Shiva** and **Shailendras** followed **Buddhism**. However, others oppose this view as they claim that both **Indianised dynasties** belonged to two different tribes lived in the same area but came up as the independent Royal clans at different time [31].

There is a strong possibility of spread of **Mahayana Buddhism** in Indonesia/Java region after 750 CE and the construction of a large number of Buddhist shrines during 8^{th} to 12 centuries CE are due to the direct interactions of the **rulers of Shailendra dynasty** of **Java Island** with the kings of **Pala dynasty** who ruled **Bengal** from **8^{th} to 12^{th} centuries CE**.

The use of **Sanskrit** as the main language for inscription first in **Pallava** and then in **Pranagari** script in South-east Asia does not mean that only **Indian Brahmins** carried it to that region, but most likely the **learned traders** who went there to do business due to the constant support given by the **Indian rulers** would have made it possible. Then upon invitation given by the South-east Asian kings, some religious leaders/monks, priests, craftsmen would have gone and settled there that led to creation of a long lasting influence of the Indian Culture on the local people.

As a matter of fact, despite living under the influence of Indian culture for a very long time, the South-east Asian societies do not exhibit the impact of the Indian **caste/varna** system on the common people. This is most probably due to the lesser number of Indian immigrants in these countries who mainly belonged to the upper caste Brahmins/Kshatriyas or learned traders/artisans or Buddhist monks and hence could not implement the rigid caste system there.

The story of Pallava-Kambhoja/Cambodia Connection

After the untimely death of Pallava king **Paramaesvaravarman** in the year 731 CE, the **Pallava dynasy** faced an unforeseen problem as the king died without leaving heir to rule the kingdom. Then the military commanders, administrators took the decision to bring a prince from the family of **Kadavesa Hari Varma**, the then ruler of the present-day **Cambodia** to lead the **Pallava kingdom of Tamilakam**. It is said that the ancestors of **Kadavesa Hari Varma** were originally from the lineage of **Earely Pallava dynasty**, when a brother of the king **Simhavishnu** (who ascended the throne in 6th century CE) went to **Cambodia** as a military commander.

Cambodian king **Kadavesa Hari Varma** had four sons, but out of the four, the last one named as **Pallava-Malla Parameswara** accepted the offer given by the Pallava minister and went on to become the king **Nandivarman-II** at the age of 12. **Nandivarman-II** was a devotee **Vishnu**, who constructed the **Vaikuntha Perumal temple in Kanchi** [32, 33].

Please recall our discussion on the use of **Earely Pallava script** for the **Sanskrit** inscription in the **Vo Canh** village of present-day **Vietnam** that belonged to 4rd or 5th century CE. It means to say that the **Earely Pallavas** had their presence in **Funan country** (Khmer kingdom comprised of the parts of modern-day Cambodia and Vietnam) of the South-east Asia.

Therefore, it can be said that, being the followers of **Sanatana Faith**, the kings belonging to **Pallava dynasty** (ruled **Tamilakam** from 6th to 9th centuries CE), who were the pioneers in creation of the distinct style of **South Indian Structures in Tamil Country**, would have taken the art and architectural features developed during their reigns to the South-east Asian countries including the **Sanskrit language** and **temple building expertise** [34].

It seems that in many South-east Asian Countries, starting from the 5th to 12th century CE, **Sanskrit** remained an integral part of political and courtly culture. During that period, Indian religious thoughts deeply influenced the local cultures that can be seen in the form of constructions of many Hindu and Buddhist temples and the sculptures depicting Hindu Gods like Shiva, Vishnu etc. and the idols of Buddha. Some features of **Vaikuntha Perumal Temple** of **Kanchipuram** are found in the **Angkor Vat** temple of **Cambodia** dedicated to **Vishnu**.

Maritime activities of the Imperial Chola Emperors in South-east Asia

In the South Indian history, the role of the **Chola kings,** particularly **Rajaraja-I** and his son **Rajendra Chola-I** in building a military maritime capability is unmatched. Therefore, before we take up the actual discussion on the subject of our interest, it is essential to know how the **Earlier Cholas** built their kingdom from a scratch [35].

Vijayalaya Chola is considered as the founder of medieval Chola dynasty who being the feudatory of the Pallava of Kanchipuram, in 850 CE captured Tanjavur city from the Mutharayar dynasty and established himself as an independent ruler. After capturing Tanjavur, he constructed a temple for the goddess Nirumpasudhani (Durga) near the town. Then in 871 CE, his son **Aditya-I** (871-907 CE) ascended the throne who expanded his father's kingdom by annexing **Tondainadu** (Pallava kingdom) and **Kongu** countries.

After the death of **Aditya-I**, his son **Parantaka-I** (907-953 CE) ascended the **Chola** throne who defeated **Pandya king Raja-Simha** in the battle of Vellor.

After the death of **Parantaka**-I in 950 CE, his second son **Kandaraditya** (950-956 CE) ascended the throne. But his rule was marred by the loss of **Tondaimandalam** region to **Rashtrakuta** king **Krishna-III**.

Subsequent Chola kings were; **Arinjaya** (956-957 CE); **Sundara Chola** (957-970 CE) also known as Parantaka-II are not so famous for their bravery as they could not expand the kingdom further. It was **Uttama Chola** (970-985 CE), after becoming the king of the **Chola** kingdom, regained the lost area from the **Rashtrakutas** and convincingly defeated **Pandya** king **Virapandyan**.

After the demise of **Uttam Chola**, **Rajaraja-I** ascended the throne who is popularly known as **Raja the Great**, is one of the greatest emperors of the **Chola dynasty**, who ruled between 985 and 1014 CE. He expanded the Chola Empire by conquering the kingdoms of southern India as well as Kalinga (Odisha) in the northeast. He also invaded **Sri Lanka** that began 70 years long Chola occupation of the island. He fought many battles with the **Chalukyas of Kalyani** in the north and the **Pandyas** in south. By conquering Vengi, Rajaraja laid the foundations for the Later Chola Rulers. He was devotee of **Shiva** and hence constructed the grand **Brihadisvara** temple in his capital city **Tanjavur**. In a naval expedition to north

Ceylon, he overran the Sri Lankan Kingdom of **Mahinda-V**, destroyed the capital city **Anuradhapura**. Later, he annexed Maldives and several islands located in the western region. The Cholas then waged war against **Srivijaya** kingdom of South East Asia (modern Indonesia).

Rajendra-I Chola, the most acclaimed ruler of **Chola dynasty** was the son of famous king **Rajaraja**-I and ruled from the year 1012 to 1044 CE. He continued his father's policy of aggressive conquests and expansion. As the Chola king **Rajendra**-I wanted to encourage maritime trade, right from the Mediterranean and Persia in the west, to Malaya, Sumatra, and China in the east, first he created a strong maritime capability by building many bigger ships to execute his open trade policies. Then who so ever created obstacle for his **economic interest**, he raided those places/countries, defeated them and went on to become the Dominant Ruler in the world. Under the leadership of **Rajendra-I**, the Cholas controlled the most extensive shipping routes extending from the East Coast across the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean to the west side Arabian Sea. The army/navy of the **Cholas** defeated the trade challengers like **Srivijaya** in east, Cheras in west, Ceylon in south. The main objective of his naval expedition was not only to increase his reputation as the real leader, but also to free the trade routes from the frequent intervention of the kingdoms located on the trade route who obstructed the free movement of the trading ships. Thus, the ships of Chola completely dominated the sea trade ways from the Indian sub-continent to Malacca Straits. Through the maritime activities, **Rajendra-I** Chola kept a close watch on the sea trade and also introduced Indian governance system, art and architecture in the South-east Asian region.

Apart from the creation of trade and commerce contacts, **Rajendra-I** Chola also paid attention to develop the diplomatic relations with several South-east Asian countries including, Myanmar, Vietnam, China, Cambodia, Indonesia etc. As a part of his foreign policy, he sent his ambassadors to the countries like China, Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia to win the allies.

The **Brahmins** from **South India** went to many South-east Asian countries to perform the Vedic rituals in the Royal courts, especially the **coronation ceremonies** of the **Kings** as per the **Vedic Practices**. Their presence in the Royal courts of these kingdoms, at that time made **Sanskrit** as the language of **inter-kingdom communication** and religious activities. Please note that it is due to the efforts of **medieval Pallavas** and **Cholas**, the **Sanatana cultural influence** is noticed even today, through out the **South-east Asia**. The love and affection they showed for **Sanskrit language** and **Sanatana Philosophy** definitely needs appreciation.

Now it is time to discuss and understand the main issue of the **failure of Tamil Kings** to bring the **subjects of Sri Lanka** under the influence of **Sanatana Dharma** in general and the **Tamil Language** in particular. As we have seen earlier, several kings belonging to **Pallava** and **Chola** dynasties took the **Vedic Philosophy** to many South-east Asian countries such as Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand etc. Today, almost all of these countries have accepted different religious faiths (other than ***Hinduism***), but the lasting effect of the Indian cultural is still found in these nations. Unfortunately, despite invading **Sri Lanka** on many occasions, **Tamil Rulers** could not propagate the **Tamil language** and **Hindu culture** throughout the population of the neighbouring country, **Sri Lanka**. This argument has the basis of the following points.

1. *Sinhala language* belongs to Indo-Aryan Family of the Languages.

2. *Presence of Buddhism* in Sri Lanka since Emperor Ashoka's time.

History of the invasions of Tamil Kings on Sri Lanka

Indian involvement in **Sri Lanka** begins with the arrival of the **legendary prince Vijaya** from **Kalinga** (modern Odisha or Bengal?), then the introduction of **Buddhism** at the time of **Magadha Emperor Ashoka**, and then the frequent invasions of the rulers of old Tamilakam like, Cholas, Pandyas and Cheras over a very long period [36].

It is generally believed that since **Sangam Era**, the Tamil speaking people resided in **Sri Lanka**. The closeness of **Tamil Nadu** and **Sri Lanka** would have made the people from the Indian Peninsula to move to the northern part of ancient **Ceylon/Sri Lanka Island**. Some say that since pre-historic time, Tamilians had their presence in the **ancient Ceylon**.

Keeping aside the ancient references found in **Mahavansa chronicle** written in **Pali** language around 5th or 6th century CE (Ceylon origin epic poem composed by Buddhist monk **Mahanama.** But for some, it is the historical document), here we are going to discuss only about the invasions that occurred during the **medieval period** i.e. from 600 to 1500 CE.

As mentioned elsewhere, during the period 600 and 850 CE, the **Pallava dynasty** was ruling the **Tamilakam**, but there is no concrete evidence suggesting any king from **Pallava dynasty** ever attacked **Sri Lanka** with the purpose to annex it to their kingdom. As one story goes, in the mid-7th century CE, a Sinhala rebel prince named **Mahavamma** took shelter in **Kanchipuram** with the intention to overthrow the other Sinhala ruler of **Anuradhapura** with the help of **Pallava king**. It was the first time, **Pallavas** got involved in the internal matter of

Sri Lankan politics and assisted **Mahavamma** to ascend the throne of **Anuradhapura** and then his descendants ruled Sri Lanka for about next three centuries. It is said that due to political influence of the Pallavas, in Sri Lanka, after 7th century, many new structures were built using **stone as the building block**, commonly known as **Sri Lanka-Pallava architectural method** in and around its capital city **Anuradhapura**.

With the weakening of **Pallava dynasty**, in the mid-9th century, the **Pandya** king **Srimara Srivallabha** (815-862 CE) of **Madurai**, began to show his military might, invaded **Sri Lanka** during the reign of king **Sena-I** (846 to 860 CE) and demanded heavy price in terms of gold and jewels to withdraw from its capital city **Anuradhapura**.

Chola king **Rajaraja-I** invaded **Anuradhapura** in 993 CE, and ransacked the city that served as the capital of **Sri Lanka** for nearly 14 centuries and annexed **Rajarata kingdom**. He then moved its capital to a new place called **Polonnaruwa**. **Rajaraja-I** attached northern region of Sri Lanka to his kingdom and named the province as "**Mummudi-sola-mandalam**". Then the administrator of Cholas constructed **Shiva** temple in the town **Mahatirtha.**

Rajendra-I, the son of Chola king **Rajaraja-I,** in the year **1017 CE** sent a big army to annex the complete kingdom of **Sri Lanka** and included almost whole island as a new province of Chola kingdom. Chola army captured the king **Mahinda-V** and brought him as a prisoner in India.

However, except the **southernmost region Rohana**, the **Cholas** managed to keep the other parts of **Sri Lanka** under their control for about 70 years.

In the year 1070 CE, **Vijayabahu-I** became the king of **Rohana**, consolidated his position as a military leader, and then launched final assault on the Chola army and drove them out of the country successfully. King **Vijayabahu-I** is considered by many Sri Lankans as the true leader of Sinhalese freedom. Although he recaptured **Anuradhapura** from the Cholas, but continued to rule from P**olonnaruwa**, the new capital city founded by **Cholas**. During his forty year reign, **Vijayabahu-I** (1070-1110 CE) focused his attention on rebuilding the Buddhist temples and monasteries that had been neglected during the **Chola rule**.

In the **1215 CE** king **Magha of Kalinga** (Odisha) invaded **Sri Lanka** with the big army that included soldiers from Kerala, Tamil and Kannadigas etc. He first capture **Jaffna** region from **Parakrama Pandyan-II** who controlled **Jaffna** since 1212 CE, then moved towards P**olonnaruwa.** However, he was expelled from **Polonnaruwa** in 1236 by the united Sinhalese army, still ruled **Jaffna** for next 40 years. He destroyed many **Buddhist monuments**. In 1255, **Java** king **Chandrabhanu** invaded **Jaffna** kingdom, defeated **Kalinga Magha** and ascended

the throne as the second king of the **Jaffna**. **Pandyan dynasty** allowed **Chandrabhanu** to continue his rule of the **Jaffna Kingdom** as he agreed to be a tributary to them.

13th century CE saw the revival of **Pandya dynasty** in the southern part of **Tamilakam**. When **Maravarman Kulasekharan** (1268-1308 CE) was the king, then under the leadership of **Arya Chakravarti,** in the year 1270 CE, the army of **Pandyas** invaded **Sri Lanka** that was ruled by **Parakrama Bahu–III,** and brought the **sacred tooth relic of Buddha** from the capital **Polonnaruwa** with them to **Madurai**. After sometime, a Sinhala king succeeded in taking the relic back to Lanka and placed it in **Polonnaruwa.** It was the first time, when **Pandyas** established their rule in **Jaffna kingdom** in the north Sri Lanka**.**

When Delhi Sultanate defeated **Madurai Pandya** in **1311 CE**, **Jaffna** became an independent state but remained under the **Pandyas**. Thus, the **Tamils** who settled in **Jaffna** during that period, drew inspiration and moral support from the rulers of South India and hence could maintain distinct **Indian/Hindu** culture there. When the **Tamil Country** was under the control of **Vijayanagara Empire**, out of fear, then the Sinhalese population who mainly lived in central and southern part of **Sri Lanka**, did not show interest in settling in Northern region/**Jaffna of Sri Lanka**. Since several centuries, in terms of language, culture, and religion; the **Sri Lankan Tamils** are successful in maintaining their independent identity as **Tamil**, **Dravidian**, and **Hindu** respectively. Some researchers say that due to entry of the **Portuguese** in 16th century CE, the **Sri Lankan Tamils** could not expand their dominance further.

Please note that on a few occasions, some Buddhist kings of **Sri Lanka** either attacked ***Tamil kingdoms*** directly or took part in the wars fought between the two ruling Tamil dynasties (e.g. civil war between the members of Pandya family). It means to say that the **Sinhalese kings** were drawn into the dynastic tussle of supremacy of the Pallavas, Cholas, and Pandyas.

The geographic proximity of **Sri Lanka** to **South India** had made the former more vulnerable to attacks from the **main land of India**, and therefore, to a larger extent, the political and religious histories of both neighbouring countries are inter-related.

It is to be noted here that some Sri Lankan Queens were either from the Pandya dynasty of the Tamil Land or from the Kalinga dynasty of Odisha. Hence, none of the lineages of Sinhala kings had pure blood in them, as they were directly or indirectly related to Tamil or Kalinga dynasties. Similarly, some Sinhala Kings married their daughters to the Tamil rulers (mostly given to Pandya dynasty) and in a few cases to Kalinga Royal families to elevate their status and to get the military help to defend their small Kingdoms from other Sinhala Kings.

By adopting a policy of intermarriages with the Indian dynasties mainly to form the strategic alliances, for some time, the Sri Lankan rulers were able to maintain their independence.

It is interesting to note that that **Buddhism** survived in **Sri Lanka**, despite the fact that it is located next to **India** which is the **Hindu majority country**, considering the fact that in the **last millennium**, the people of most of the islands placed in the **Indian Ocean** (Maldives, Indonesia and Lakshadweep islands of India etc.) have converted to **Islam**.

In reality, since several centuries, the Tamilians who have been residing in the South-eastern countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Sri Lanka etc. do speak **Tamil** in their homes. In the countries such as **Sri Lanka** and **Singapore**, **Tamil language** has been given the status of the Official Language. However, on day-to-day basis use of **Tamil language** is restricted to the **P**eople of **I**ndian **O**rigin (**PIO**) only.

At present, whole Northern and Eastern parts of **Sri Lanka** are occupied by **Tamilians**, means about one-third of **Sri Lanka territory** is under the possession of the **Tamil speaking population**. In the balance two-third area, mostly Sinhalese are dwelling. This was the situation in the year 1948 also, when **Sri Lanka** got independence from the **British**. At the time of independence, the British Government did not consider the request for the **independent Tamil country**, but handed over the **Tamil speaking area** to the **dominant Sinhalese**.

As a matter of fact, the politicians from Tamil Nadu regularly raise hue and cry about **Sanskrit** and **Hindi** languages as both have been categorised by the linguists as the **Indo-Aryan Languages**. This is because, the present-day **Tamilians** call themselves as the true representatives of **ancient Dravidian Culture** that flourished on the **South Indian soil** more than two thousand years BP (before present), and hence they play **hate politics** with the North Indians as they consider themselves as the **Original Habitants of Indian Sub-continent** and the **Aryas/North Indians** as the **intruders/ outsiders**. But the irony is that, the **Tamil Speakers** who live in **Sri Lanka** have to study and use **Sinhala** the **first official Language** of that country which also belongs to the **Indo-Aryan Family of Languages**.

As discussed earlier, it is the medieval **Pallava** and **Chola** dynasties of ***Tamilakam*** who carried **Sanatana traits** to the several South-east Asian countries and made the **Indian culture** popular there, but could not carve out an independent country for the **Tamil Speaking Hindu people** in **Sri Lanka** during their tenures. **Muslim invaders** who ruled **India** for about six centuries, imposed their **language**, **culture** and **converted many native people to their faith**.

VII. Contributions of the Tamil Brahmins in enriching the Tamil Culture:

As mentioned earlier, with the establishment of **Justice Party** in the **Madras Presidency** of India in the year **1916 CE** especially to neutralize the growing dominance of the ***Brahmin community*** in the British Government jobs and education field, **Tamil Brahmins** became the **soft targets** of the non-Brahmin leaders of the **Justice movement**. In December 1916, **Justice Party** published its **anti-Brahmin manifesto** demanding greater representations in the employment and education on the caste-based **Tamil speaking population**.

Even though **Tamil Brahmins** considered themselves as the **Tamil** speaking members of the **Tamil society**, the leaders of **Justice Party** identified them as the enemies of the political and social progress **all non-Brahmin communities** of the **Madras Presidency**. Thus the **non-Brahmin** movement started in the name of **Justice Party**, subsequently became the inspiration for **Dravidian Identity** as many **non-Brahmin leaders** taunted the **Brahmins** as the **Outsiders** or the **Aryas** or the **North Indians** settled in the **Tamil land** who have been exploiting the native people through the **religious authority**. The leaders of **Justice Party** felt that the education would make the lower caste people politically active and assertive too.

British administrators noticed that although the **Brahmins** are divided among themselves on the basis of distinct regional identities in India, as they are found in almost all parts of the Indian Sub-continent, together their caste happens to be the "**only national caste**". Since ancient time, they have been working directly under the **Ruling Class** as the advisors, hence the majority of Indian people respect them. That is why, in the beginning, they were educated first and recruited by the British Governors to assist them in administrative work.

Here the basic question is, **when did the Brahmins land in Tamilakam**?

Re-interpretation of the Legend linked to the North Indian "Sage Agastya"

The story of **Sage Agastya** has a deep impact on the beliefs of South Indian people, and particularly the population of **Tamil Nadu**. In Tamil Nadu, he is treated as a **cultural icon** and has been mentioned in many Tamil texts. **Agastya** is also the name one of the Rigvedic Poets and the **Mandala-1** hymns **Rv-1.165** to **Rv-1.191** are credited to him. As far as the name is concerned, the term **Sage Agatsya** is also found in other texts like Vedas, many Puranas, Upanishadas, Ramayana, and Mahabharata etc.

Since **Agastya**'s name appears in **many ancient scriptures composed over a very long period of time**, he cannot be a single person, but possibly be the different individuals belonging to the clan of ancient Rigvedic Poet **Agastya**. In **Rigved**, there exists the clan culture of the ancient Rishis such as the **Angirasas**, the **Bhrigus**, and the **Visvamitras** etc. which manifests that the descendants of a famous/ revered Rishi are collectively called by the name of founder of that clan (or a Gotra). For example, the term **Angirasas** stands for all those persons who conventionally belong to the clan of **pre-Rigvedic Rishi Angirasa** [37].

As per the **Sanskrit Puranas** (North Indian) and **Tamil legends**, sage **Agastya** is the **first Rishi** who crossed the **Vindhya Mountain** and migrated to **South India**. In some Tamil literature, his name appears as **Agathiyar** or **Agastiyar**. As per the Tamil text that is supposed to have composed during the **medieval period**, he is considered as the **first Siddhar**, means an expert in both philosophical and practical domains.

The old Tamil tradition describes **Sage Agastya** as the originator of the **Tamil language** and the compiler of the first **Tamil grammar**, called **Agattiyam** or **Akattiyam**.

As there are several mythical elements hidden in the **Northern** and **Southern traditions** of **Sage Agastya**, the descriptions found in both the versions cannot qualify as the historical records, but merely a legendary exercise done to one's satisfaction [38].

However, based on the legendary tales, it can be assumed that a ***first batch of Brahmins*** led by a Brahmin belonging to **Agastya clan** arrived in South India anytime between 1000 to 500 BCE, settled there and learned the (proto?) Dravidian language spoken by the locals, then the leader gave a few tips to improve the speech and that is nothing but today's **Tamil**. As no ancient literature talks about any **North Indian king** invaded **South India** before 500 BCE, hence it can be guessed that it is the **Brahmins** from North who first ventured into the Southern part of the Indian Sub-continent and made their home earlier to 500 BCE. During the period of **Harappan Civilization** (also known as Indus Valley Civilization), there would have been the **trade contacts** between the **North Indians** and **South Indians**. As the legends composed subsequently mention the names of the kings of Southern kingdoms such as Chera, Pandya and Chola, means the **Brahmins** from North would have arrived in South in many waves.

Now we shall take up the case of **Adi Shankaracharya** to understand the free movement a **Brahmin** from **South** to **North**. Many scholars say that **Adi Shankaracharya** was born in 8th century CE in **Kalady** village of **Ernarkulam** district of present-day **Kerala** state in a **South Indian Brahmin family** and had short life-span about 32 years (788 to 820

CE). It is said that by eight, he had mastered all four Vedas, left for North in search of **Guru**. On the bank of **Narmada** River, he met **Govinda Bhagavadpada** who agreed to become his **Guru**. During his stay in North India, **Shankaracharya** travelled in all directions of the Indian Sub-continent to propagate his **Advaita** ideology through discourses and often debated with other philosophers of his time. For the revival of **Sanatana Dharma**, he also established four **Mathas**/Ashrams in four different directions of India, i.e. **Puri** (East); **Dwaraka** (West); **Badrinath** (North) and **Shringeri** (South). It other words, the story of **Adi Shankaracharya** tells us that a **determined Brahmin/Sanyasi** from **South** can go anywhere in **India** to gain the knowledge, frame his independent views on the various Hindu scriptures including Bhagavata-Gita and then express the same with courage in front of the well-known thinkers of that era.

Even though the description available about **Sage Agastya's** contribution to **Tamil Culture** is of mythical in nature, still there a room to believe that initially **some Brahmins** from the **North** would have come to **South** even before 500 BCE and mingled with the native people without any reservation and were followed by the arrival the **new waves of Brahmins** over a period of time. The legend of **Sage Agastya's** migration **symbolically** indicates a transfer of **Vedic Ideas** (cultural and spiritual elements) including **Sanskrit** from the **North to South at least 500 years B**efore the **C**ommon **E**ra **(BCE).**

Veneration of "North Indian Sage Agastya" in South India and South-east Asia

The idols of **Sage Agastya** are found either in a few temples exclusively dedicated to Rishi **Agastya** or in the temples devoted to Lord **Shiva** in India as well as the South-east Asian countries such as **Java** (Island of Indonesia), **Vietnam**, **Cambodia** etc. means as good as he is **Deified** by the people. **Agastya Jayanti** is a significant festival for many people in South India.

A list of the important temples where the idols of **Sage Agastya** are found in **Tamil Nadu state of India** is given below.

- Agastheeswarar Temple, located in the town of Agathiyampalli, Tamil Nadu.
- Sri Agastheeswarar Temple, Kallidaikurichi, Thirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu.
- Sri Agastheeswarar Temple, Ambasamudram, Thirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu.
- Adi Kumbeswara Temple, near Kumbakonam, Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu.
- Ranganathaswamy Temple, in Srirangam, near Tirichirapalli.
- Agastar Temple, T Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

In **Kerala state**, Agastya Maha Kshetram on the banks of the river Valapattinam in Kannur district; Agastyaputhur, Pullupikadavu, Kannur; and Agasthiar Swamy Temple located in Pazhayakadalane - Saligothra Theruv, Balaramapuram, in the Thiruvananthapuram district are some of the temples devoted to **Sage Agastya**.

As **Sage Agastya** is considered as one of the key disciples of **Lord Shiva**, and hence, the believers of **Shiva** carried his image to South-east Asia as well. Due to this belief, the story of **Agastya** has made a deep impact on the religious life of South-east Asian people as the **Mataram dynasty of Java** (Indonesia) constructed a temple dedicated to him in 760 CE. In Javanese Language, **Agastya** is denoted as a **Guru** and he is revered in Javanese Ramayana. The influence of **Sage Agastya** is also found in Javanese literature, especially ***Agastya Parva***.

In one of the chambers of **Shiva temple** of the **Prambanan (Param Brahman?)** temple complex constructed during 9th and 10 centuries CE, presently located on the outskirts of **Yogyakarta city** of **Java** island of **Indonesia**, there is a statue of **Agastya**. In many medieval **Shiva** shrines of **Java** Island, the statue of Sage **Agastya** is commonly found. It proves that **Shaivism** was patronized by the Javanese Rulers and also adopted by the common people.

A stone idol of **Sage Agastya** in a seated position of **Angkor** period dated 975 CE is discovered in **Cambodia**.

Although the name of Sage **Agastya** is not found in the list of **Saptrishi** mentioned in the ancient texts like **Shatapatha Brahmana** and **Brihadaranyaka Upanishad***;* **Krishna Yajurveda** (in the Sandhya-Vandana Mantras) and **Mahabharata** and **Brihat Samhita**, yet he is worshipped in many parts of India.

Note:

Recently, on one of the roof beams of **Ranga Mandapam** in the Avi **Mukteswara Temple** in the town **Penukonda** of the **Sri Sathya Sai district** of Andhra Pradesh, one historian has discovered a **Sanskrit** inscription written in **Nandi-nagari** script which reveals a travel story of **Sage Agastya** from **North to South** starting from the **Vindhya Mountain** to Kashi kshetra, Brahmapuram (present-day Penukonda) and then his meditation by the side of lake Ghanagiri. As per the historical records, the temple was built during the period of **Vijayanagara Empire** in the year **1405 CE**, when Virupaksha Raya I (July 1404-1405) was the king of empire (source-News reports) [39].

Participation of the Brahmins in the "Bhakti Movement" of Tamil Land

As mentioned in the earlier paragraphs, much before 500 BCE, the **Brahmins** from North and **not the Kings/ Kshatriyas** entered the Southern part of India, **not to rule the local people**, but mainly to understand the lifestyle of the native population, then to merge with them so as to win the hearts of the South Indians and lastly to introduce the Vedic Philosophy.

As discussed elsewhere, some Poets of the **Sangam era** were from the **Brahmin** community, means they were already knowing **Tamil** as these poems are composed in ancient **Tamil language** only. Additionally, their presence has also been attested by the composers of the poems belonging **Puranaanuuru** anthology, wherein some poets have clearly identified them as the **Brahmins**. Hence it can be said that even before the commencement of the **Sangam Period**, the **Brahmins** had settled down in the **Tamil country** [40].

Moreover, in some **Sangam Age poems**, there are references of the **kings from Early Pandya** and **Chola dynasties** performing **Yajna** the well-known **Vedic ritual**. It means to say that, the **Vedic Philosophy** was already rooted in the **Tamil society** of that period [41].

It is generally said when the **Kalabhras** ruled **Tamilakam** (300 to 600 CE), the kings patronised **Buddhism** and **Jainism** and the **Brahminical/Vedic** philosophy was severely criticized by the **Rulers** as well as the **monks of both religions**. In the 6^{th} century, when king **Simhavishnu** of **Pallava dynasty** defeated the **Kalbhras,** then the **Brahmins** became active again as it brought the change in approach towards **Sanatana Doctrine**. **Pallava kings** started employing the **Brahmins** as the ministers cum advisors and purposely donated the lands and villages to the members of **Brahmin** community, which is known as **Bramhadeya**. Due to segregation of the Brahmins in a particular area (separate villages for the **Brahmins** were established) prompted the **special status** to them in the **Tamil society**. In no time, this distinction became the real cause for the development of a **caste system in Tamil Land**.

At that time, majority of the **Brahmins** used to spend their life to study Vedas and Puranas written in **Sanskrit**. However, due to their closeness to the **Royal class** and knowledge of **Sanskrit**, the **Pallava kings** employed them as the **Priests** in the several new rock-cut temples constructed by them. In the temples, Brahmins' main job was to recite **Vedas** daily in front of the idol of Deity and conduct **Yajnas** as per the requirement of the Royal family. As they got special treatment from the kings, slowly, the **Brahmins** became arrogant (head-strong) in behaviour. This has further alienated the **Priestly Brahmins** from the masses.

In the early 7th century CE, during the **Pallava's** period, in the **Tamilakam,** the **Bhakti Movement** was independently initiated by the two types of **Saint-Poets**; the **Alvars** and **Nayanars**. **Alvars** were the devotees of Lord **Vishnu** and **Nayanars** were of Lord **Shiva**. The **Sanskrit** word **Bhakti/ भक्ति** means **devotion** or **love** or **affection** or **worship** or **trust**.

In practical sense, **Bhakti** means surrender to **God of choice** to attain salvation. As per the literature, during 7th to 11th centuries CE, there were **12 Alvar** saints/ **Vaishnavates** and **63 Nayanar** saints /**Shaivates** who directly involved in spreading the **Bhakti Movement** in the **medieval Tamil Country**. The best part of the movement is, they travelled from a place to place, specifically to sing the songs of praise composed in **Tamil language** in the name of God. Since God was visualised in the form of an **idol**, these saints visited several temples located at different places and were successful in attracting attention of the ordinary people towards the simple but almost non-ritualistic worship (very simple ritual act like offering flowers to Deity or lighting a lamp in the night). Thus, in a plain and simple manner, the **Bhakti movement** countered both, the **severe austerity practices** preached by the monks of **Buddhism and Jainism** to achieve salvation and also the **highly ritual-based Braminical** method of worship.

As **Bhakti** became accessible to all without any caste or gender bias, it brought the feeling of oneness in the society. It implicitly reflects the unified protest against the caste-based discrimination of the ordinary people. It also posed a strong challenge to **religious authority of the Priests** as in the field of worship, the **Sanskrit learned Brahmins** had monopoly since beginning.

Now it is time to know more about the social background of the **Saint-Poets** who spearheaded the **Bhakti Movement**. As mentioned earlier, in the early seventh to ninth centuries, **Tamil Country** was under control of the **Pallavas** and during their reigns, the **Saints-Poets** belonged to two different groups; i.e. **Alvars** and **Nayanars** who gave desired shape to **Bhakti Movement** in South India lived. As a matter of fact, these **Saint-Poets** came from all walks of life like, the artisans, farmers, Kshatriyas, Brahmins and untouchables as well. It means to say that only some of them were from the **Brahmin families**. The **Alvars** were the worshippers of Lord **Vishnu and his incarnations** and the **Nayanars** were the devotees of Lord **Shiva and his family members**.

There were **12 Alvars** who came from the varied social settings and mostly lived during the **Pallavas**' time. Similarly, there were **63 Nayanars** who belonged to different caste backgrounds who mostly lived during the reigns of the **Pallavas** and **Early Cholas**.

Important Alvar Saints who belonged to "Brahmin Community"

The **Alvars** were a group of **Tamil Saint-Poets** from the medieval period lived in **Tamilakam**, known for their devotion to the **Lord Vishnu**. The Tamil word **Alvar** manifests they were God-intoxicated people. They had an access to **Vishnu temples** wherein they sang the hymns composed in **Tamil** by them in praise of **Vishnu**. **Alvars** served as the **catalyst for the Bhakti Movement** as they rejected the **ritual-oriented Vedic practices** and firmly believed in devotion as the only path to salvation. Regardless of the existing caste system, the people from different sections of the society joined the movement.

The **Alvars** did not believe in the rigid caste structure of that time as the ardent devotees of **Vishnu** came from different caste groups. Out of twelve, **seven of them were Brahmins**, one was a **Kshatriya**, two were **Sudras** and one was of the low **Panar** caste. One of them, **Andal**, was a woman who is considered to be a **manifestation of Bhu-Devi**, a consorts of **Visnu**. There are about 4000 hymns composed by the **Alvars** and are collectively called as **Divya-prabhandham**.

Thirumalisai Alvar was said to be the son of a Sage **Bhargava**; Thondaradipodi Alvar, Mathurakavi Alvar, Perialvar were **Brahmin** [42].

The most celebrated Nayanar Saints who belonged to "Brahmin Community"

During the medieval period, the **Nayanars** played a key role in the **Bhakti movement** in South India. The **Nayanars** were a group of **63 Tamil Shaivate saints**, revered in Tamil Nadu, who lived during the 6th to 9th centuries CE. They were the devotees of **God Shiva** and composed several devotional songs/hymns in **Tamil**, which were later collected into the twelve volumes of poems known as **Tirumurai**. However, the hymns sung by Saint **Sundarar, Appar** or **Tirunavakkaracar,** and **Tirujnana Sambandar** are called as **Tevaram**. It is in the form of first seven volumes of the collection of **Tirumurai**.

Like the **Alvars**, the Shaivate Poets or **Nayanars** too came from different social backgrounds, including the Oilmongers, Brahmins, Dalits, Nadars, Vanniyars, Vellalas, Idayars, Kurumbars, and Thevars etc. However, out of the **63 Saint-Poets**, **more than 36 were from the Brahmin origin** [43].

Basic Ideas of the hymns of Nayanars

- Single-minded devotion for Lord Shiva.
- The Shiva Temples are the sacred sites.
- The rituals are secondary.
- Social equality with no ego.

Among the 63 Nayanars; **Appar**, **Sundarar**, **Sambandar** along with **Manikkavacakar** are treated as the **foremost Nayanars (Nalvaror** /the Four). Except **Appar** (also known as **Tirunavakkaracar** means the King of the divine Tongue or "Master of Speech") who was probably from Vellal caste, remaining **three were the Brahmins**. Therefore, here we shall discuss about the **three prominent Brahmin Nayanars** in brief.

1. **Sambandar**: He is also known as **Tirujnana Sambandar;** was born to **Brahmins** parents in 7th century CE. A child prodigy, **Sambandar** composed hymns celebrating Shiva's grace and protection. **Sambandar** lived for **sixteen years only** and was contemporary of **Appar,** another great Shaiva Saint-Poet. He is one of the most prominent of the sixty-three Nayanars, The compositions of the Saint- Poet are preserved in the first three volumes of the **Tirumurai**, and provide a part of the philosophical foundation of **Shaiva Siddhanta**.

2. Sundarar: He is also referred to as **Chuntarar** (in **Tamil**), **Sundarmurti Nayanar**, **Nampi Aruran** or **Tampiran Tolan**. **Sundarar** had the ***Sakhya Bhava*** or the attitude of a friend towards the Lord **Shiva**. That is why, he was called "***Tampiran Tholan***" meaning a close friend of God. It is said that **Sundara**r lived in the 8th century and **born to Brahmin parents**. Sundarar is unique among the Nayanars in that both of his birth parents are also recognized as Nayanars (Devotees of Shiva). **Sundarar** shared the same respect as **Sambandar** and **Appar** as the **Samaya Acharyas** by the tradition. The efforts of the **Tevaram trio** and other **Nayanars** helped in transforming this "as the central element of the **Shaiva Siddhanta** philosophical and theological system, and formed the basis of the **Tamil Shaiva soteriology**", which emphasizes the organised way of worship keeping the importance of the temple in performing the **Bhakti**.

3. Manikkavachakar: He is considered as one of the most renowned among the Tamil Shaiva saints, as along with **Appar, Sunderar and Sambandar; Manikkavacakar** is often grouped to make a set of **high status Shaiva Saints**. It is said that **Manikkavachakar** was born in Pandya country during 9th century CE in a **Priestly family**.

From the above information, it is clear that the **Alvars** and **Nayanars** have created literary tradition that encompasses **Devotion** and **Spirituality**, and made it accessible to all the sections of **Tamil Society**. The devotional songs composed by **Tamil Saints** became part of the temple rituals. The success of **Bhakti Movement** was mainly due to the royal patronage it received as the movement that began during the period of the **Pallavas** was encouraged by the **Chola kings** too. However, no one can deny the role of **Brahmins** in shaping the movement.

The Brahmins who proudly presented the glory of "Tamil Culture" to the World

It is commonly said that if a person wants to show pride in something and therefore, starts praising the same, means he/she thinks it is more important or a very special than other things known to him/her. It also indicates the act of honouring someone for a specific purpose or celebrating something after knowing it properly. It actually demonstrates the combination of the feeling of pride with the act of glorifying or elevating something to a higher status [44].

In the last 150 years, there were many eminent personalities born and brought up in the erstwhile **Madras Presidency** (now Tamil Nadu state) who came from the **Brahmin families**, but exhibited strong affection for the **ancient Tamil Culture** through their research work on South Indian history, arts and architectures, ancient Tamil literature etc. In the following paragraphs, we shall discuss about some of the **Brahmins** who glorified the **Tamil Culture**.

1. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer (1855-1942 CE):

Uttamadhanapuram Venkatasubbaiyer Swaminatha Iyer was a **Tamil scholar** and researcher who was instrumental in bringing many long-forgotten works of classical Tamil literature to light. Over five decades, **Dr. U.V. Swaminatha Iyer** undertook extensive travels to locate the palm-leaf manuscripts of ancient Tamil literature, leading to the revival of old Tamil history, including history of the Chera, Pandya, and Chola dynasties. Iyer visited remote villages, libraries, and private collections across Tamil Nadu, such as the **Saraswati Mahal Library** in **Tanjavur** and many temples in and around Madurai, Kumbhakonam, Tiruvavaduturai Shaivate matha etc. to collect the manuscripts of long-forgotten texts. These were not easy to locate. The palm-leaf manuscripts had limited lifespans, and many had been

lost or destroyed. Some had been copied and recopied so many times that errors had crept in. Others had been kept hidden, dismissed as outdated or irrelevant**.** Each text had multiple versions. Iyer compared them line by line, choosing the most consistent readings and correcting mistakes where possible. He cross-checked with commentaries and consulted practitioners of the traditions in which the texts had been written --Jains, Buddhists, and Shaiva scholars alike.

During his life time, he has edited and published more than 90 books including Jain classic ***Jeevaka Chintamani****;* Tamil classics like **Silapattikaram**, **Manimekalai**; **Sangam era** poems such as **Pattupattu** and **Ettuthokai**, many devotional books etc. In fact, **he is credited to have rediscovered many ancient Tamil texts.** But for him the **Tamil country** would have lost many ancient literary works. By recovering and then publishing the works like Jeevaka Chintamani, Silappattikaram, and Manimekalai, UAS Iyer made a claim: **Tamil literary culture was older**, more diverse, and more self-sustaining than the **colonial scholars assumed**.

Swaminatha Iyer's publications threw light on the glorious presence of **Tamil music** in the earlier centuries and paved the way for serious research on the subject. He opened the doors and created a platform for multiple branches of research in Tamil culture, history and literature.

Iyer was honoured with a golden bracelet. In 1925, the title **"Dakshina Kalanidhi**" was awarded to him by **Kamakoti Pitathipathi Sri Sankara Swamigal**. In 1932, the Madras University awarded the title ``**Doctor**'' to him in recognition of his services for the cause of **Tamil Culture**. Dr. Iyer died on April 28, 1942. It was due to his efforts, that the world came to know the wonderful literary output of the **ancient Tamils** and **their glorious past** [45. 46].

He is respectfully referred to as "**Thamizh Thatha**", the **grandfather of Tamil Literature**.

2. V. Venkayya (1864-1912):

Rai Bahadur Valaiyattur Venkayya (1864-1912) was born in **Tamil Brahmin** family who started his career in the epigraphic field under the guidance of a German scholar Sir **Eugen Julius Theodor Hultzsch** and became the most well-known expert in deciphering **Sanskrit** and **Tamil inscriptions** found in Tamil Nadu and **Sanskrit** inscriptions in North India [47].

In 1886, he went to Mamallapuram to see the famed Pallava monuments and sculptures. It was at the seaport of the Pallavas, **Venkayya** met **E. Hultzsch**, the scholar and first Chief Epigraphist engaged by the **Archaeological Survey of India**, who was committed to collect

South Indian inscriptions and was immersed in this work in **Mamallapuram**. **Venkayya** saw the German was struggling to interpret **Sanskrit inscriptions**, offered him to help. Hultzsch, impressed by Venkayya's interest, told him to decode the script. **Hultzsch** then came to know about **Venkayya's** mastery in **Sanskrit** and **Tamil languages**, decided to induct **Venkayya** into the **Epigraphy Department of the ASI**. While working in this department, **Venkayya** became expert in copying inscriptions, taking precise impressions of them, analysing their contents and interpreting the results. He painstakingly deciphered many temple inscriptions of South India, which resulted in proper insights. His hard work in understanding the contents of these inscriptions have been the inspiration for many a budding scholar in later years.

An important inscription which he copied was a Pallava record of the reign of King Dantivarman datable to the 8th century C.E., from the Parthasarathi Swami temple, Thiruvallikeni (Triplicane) in Madras. Among the many Chola epigraphs studied by him, special mention must be made of the famous 11th century Thiruvalangadu copper-plate inscription of Rajendra Chola I. He also copied many inscriptions from the historic village of Uttiramerur and published the important ones which throw much light on village administration of the Chola times. For his immense contribution to the field of epigraphy and Indology in general, the British Government honoured him with the title **'Rai Bahadur'** [48].

Venkayya wrote a very large number of articles on various aspects of South Indian history, including the contribution of kings to irrigation by endowing the villages and towns with artificial lakes, tanks and irrigation channels. He wrote an article on '**Irrigation in South India**' and gave a long list of all the tanks mentioned in the Pallava, Chola, Pandya and Vijayanagara inscriptions.

The meticulous work started by **Hultzsch**, and then continued by **Venkayya** after the retirement of the former and his returned to Germany, then produced many volumes of books titled **South Indian Inscriptions**. These inscriptions often talked on the land grants or other donations, judgements, tax relief, and such administrative matters. But they are preceded by some stanzas of **prashasti** of the kings, which also mention the regnal years.

3. VG Suryanarayana Sastri alias **Parithimar Kalaignar (1870 to 1903):**

Suryanarayana Sastri a Professor of **Tamil language** at the **Madras Christian College** was the first person to campaign for the **recognition of Tamil as a classical language**.

In the year **1902 C.E.**, he proposed that **Tamil be designated as a "classical language**" thereby becoming the first person to make such a petition. **Suryanarayana Sastri** a **Brahmin by birth**, had immense love for **Tamil** and wrote many books in **Tamil** [49].

Sastri, for one, changed his name to '**Parithimar Kalaignar**' by replacing '**Surya**' (sun) with '**Parithi** and '**Narayana**' with '**Mar**' (another name for Lord **Vishnu**). In pure Tamil, **Vishnu** is also referred to as Thirumaal. 'Sastri', meaning someone who has obtained punditry in many subjects, was replaced by '**Kalaignar**.' He wrote poetry, prose, drama, and he authored a standard work on Tamil dramaturgy called ***Natakaviyal***.

4. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri (1892-1975 CE):

An eminent historian who wrote **South Indian History**, that threw light on the Cholas and Pandyas Dynasties. Many of his books form the standard reference works on the subject.

Nilakanta Sastri was born in a **Telugu Niyogi Brahmin** family in Kallidaikurichi near Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu on 12 August 1892. Sastri wrote as many as 150 research papers and 22 books. He cultivated a deep interest in South Indian political history, and wrote extensively on the cultural ties between South India and South-east Asia. Once he stated that the most striking feature of the **Sangam Age** was its '**composite quality'** best described as the combination of two distinct cultures; **North Indian Aryan** and **South Indian Dravidian**. However, historian **Noboru Karashima** notes that 'as a **Brahmin**, his inclination was to emphasise the role of **North Indian** and **Sanskrit culture** on the development of **South Indian society**' [50].

5. Subramania Bharati (1888 to 1921):

Subramaniyan was born on 11 December 1882 in a **Tamil Brahmin** family in the town of Ettayapuram in Tirunelveli district, Madras Presidency (present day Thoothukudi district, Tamil Nadu) to **Chinnaswami Iyer** and **Lakshmi Ammal**. He was called as Subbaih by his parents. Although born into an orthodox **Brahmin family**, he gave up his own caste identity. He considered all living beings are equal and to illustrate this, he even performed **upanayanam** to a young **Harijan/Dalit man** and declared him a **Brahmin**.

From a young age, **Subramaniyan** was inclined towards music and poetry. At the age of 11, he was given the title of "**Bharati**" (meaning blessed by the goddess of learning, Saraswati) for his excellence in poetry.

Bharati was one of the pioneers of **modern Tamil literature**. He is known by the nickname "**Mahakavi**" ("The Great Poet"). **Bharati** used simple words and rhythms, unlike the previous century works in Tamil, which had complex vocabulary. His **songs on nationalism and freedom of India** helped to rally the masses to support the Indian Independence Movement in Tamil Nadu [51].

Bharati was well-versed in several languages, but had a love for **Tamil**. His literary works covered political, social and spiritual themes. Songs and poems composed by **Bharti** are used in Tamil literature, music and daily life. His works include ***Panjali Sabatham, Kannan Paatu, Kuyil Paatu, Paapa Paatu, Chinnanchriu Kiliye, Vinayagar Nanmanimalai*** and Tamil translations of Patanjali's ***Yoga Sutra*** and ***Bhagavat Gita***. Please bear in mind that **Bharati** was the **first Indian poet** whose literature was **nationalized in 1949**.

Bharati's poetry expressed progressive and reformist ideals. His poetry combined the classical and contemporary elements. He penned thousands of verses on diverse topics like **Indian Nationalism**, **love**, **children, nature**, and **glory of the Tamil language**.

6. Revivification of "Bharatanatyam Dance" is due to two Tamil Brahmins:

Bharatanatyam is a classical Indian dance form originated in Tamil Nadu, India. It is recognized as a **classical dance form** by the **Sangeet Natak Akademi** and often used to express Hindu and Jain religious themes and stories**. Bharata Muni**'s **Natya Shastra** (written about 200 B.C.E.) provides information on this dance form. The **Abhinaya Darpana** by **Nandikesvara** is one of the main sources of textual material, for the study of the technique and **grammar of body movement in Bharatnatyam Dance**. There is also a great deal of visual evidence of this dance form in paintings and stone and metal sculptures of ancient times. On the **Eastern Gopurams** of the **Chidambaram temple**, one can see a series of **108 dance poses**,

frozen in stone by the **Tamil sculptors**. **Bharatnatyam dance** is known to be ***ekaharya***, where one dancer takes on many roles in a single performance.

The term **Bharatanatyam** is derived by joining the two **Sanskrit** words '**Natyam**' meaning **dance** and '**Bharata**' which is believed to be mnemonic containing **Bha** (*Bhava*/emotions); **Ra** (*Raga*/melody) and **Ta** (*Tala*/rhythm). Thus the term **Bharatanatyam** means a dance that expresses **Bhava**, **Raga** and **Tala**.

However, to understand **Bharatanatyam** fully, a person needs to have thorough knowledge of Hindu customs, legends and epics, then only one could appreciate its beauty, grace and expressivity in totality. **Different *Mudras*** or **Dance Poses** do exhibit the meaningful thoughts and emotions. Today, **Bharatanatyam dance** has become a **cultural symbol** or **identity of the Tamil Nadu state** [52].

In the olden day, it was called ***Sadeer-Attam*** or ***Sadir*** and was performed solo or group by ***Devadasis***, who were women dancers and priestess (the 'maids of God' /dedicated to temple services), as a form of prayer connected with the practice of Hinduism. **Devadasis** used to dance and sing, to praise the Hindu deities. After sometime, on demand, **Devadasis** started performing the dance in the courts of kings to entertain the invitees/audience.

In the early 19th century CE, when the British Colonial Rulers took the control of South India, they instituted a ban on numerous Indian classical art forms, and thus brought the end to an age-old tradition of the **temple performances of Bharatanatyam**.

In the year 1932, **E Krishna Iyer** and **Rukmini Devi Arundale**, at a meeting of the **Madras Music Academy**, decided to give the dance form a measure of respect, and therefore, put forward a proposal to rename ***Sadira-attam*** as **Bharatanatyam**. The duo were also instrumental in re-establishing the dignity of dance by removing sexually explicit elements and encouraging the **girls from Brahmin community** to practice the same and then perform the dance in front of the audience. The process of revival of the **Bharatanatyam dance** and its re-branding as '***classical***' was an uphill task and hence the sincere efforts of duo must be praised.

E. Krishna Iyer (1897-1968) was an Indian lawyer, freedom-fighter, classical artist and activist. He was the follower of traditional Isaivellalar practitioners of **Sadir**, also known as **Bharatanatyam**. **Krishna Iyer** founded the **Madras Music Academy** and teamed with **Rukmini Devi Arundale** to save the dance art from dying out [53].

Rukmini Devi Arundale (born in a **Sastry family**; 1904-1986) was an Indian theosophist, dancer and choreographer of the Indian classical dance form of **Bharatanatyam**, and an activist for animal welfare. **Rukmini Devi Arundale**, along with her husband **George Arundale**, founded the **Kalakshetra Foundation** in **Chennai**, which played a vital role in nurturing talent and promoting **Bharatanatyam** on a **national and global stage** [54].

Tamil Brahmins who brought laurels for their State and Nation

The **Tamil Brahmins**, primarily consist of the **Iyer** (Shaivate) and **Iyengar** (Vaishnavate) communities, have a very long history in **Tamil Nadu**. In the following paragraphs, we shall discuss about the **three key Tamil Brahmins** who are recognised by the **whole world** for their very special contributions in the fields of **Mathematics** and **Science**.

1. S Ramanujan (1887-1920): **Srinivasa Ramanujan** was an **Indian mathematician** known for his exceptional contributions in several mathematical domains, including mathematical analysis, infinite series, continued fractions, number theory, game theory, and the properties of the partition function that made him **one of history's greatest mathematicians** [55].

He was born on 22 December 1887 into a **Tamil Brahmin Iyengar family** in Erode, in present-day Tamil Nadu. He had limited access to formal education in Mathematics and was **largely self-taught**. Although he never received proper guidance and encouragement in India, most of his mathematical discoveries were based only on intuition and many were proven correct. With the humble background and several health problems, his life story is just as fascinating as his incredible work in the field of Mathematics. Every year, **Ramanujan's birth anniversary on December 22** is observed as **National Mathematics Day** [56].

2. Sir CV Raman (1888-1970)**: Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman**, was born on November 7, 1888, to **Tamil Brahmin parents** at Tiruchirappalli in Madras Presidency. His father was a lecturer in mathematics and physics. Therefore, at a young age, he was exposed to an academic environment. His unusual research in Physics made him known to the whole world [57. 58].

He discovered the **Raman Effect** or **Raman Scattering** for which he was awarded a **Nobel Prize** in **Physics** in **1930**. He was the **first Asian** to get this recognition. As **Raman Effect** was discovered on **28 February 1928** and therefore, every year on **February 28**, India celebrates it as the **National Science Day** to pay tribute to Nobel Laureate **Sir C.V. Raman**.

3. MS Swaminathan (1925-2023)**: Mankombu Sambasivan Swaminathan** [59, 60] was an Indian geneticist and plant breeder, administrator and humanitarian born in an affluent **Tamil Brahmin family** on **7 August 1925**. He has been specifically called the **main architect of the Green Revolution in India** for his leadership and role in introducing and further developing high-yielding varieties of wheat and rice. **Swaminathan** carried out basic research related to potato, wheat, and rice, in areas such as cytogenetic, ionizing radiation, and radiosensitivity. **Swaminathan** is considered as a **global leader of the Green Revolution**.

Telugu Brahmins who popularised Carnatic Music in Tamil Nadu

Carnatic music is a classical music tradition originated in **South India**, and specifically associated with the states of **Karnataka**, **Tamil Nadu**, **Andhra Pradesh**, and **Keral**a. The greatest concentration of Carnatic musicians is found in **Chennai** the capital city of **Tamil Nadu state**. Various **Carnatic music festivals** are held throughout India and abroad, including the **Madras Music Season**, which has been considered to be one of the world's grand cultural events. **Purandara Dasa** (1484–1564) who lived during the period of **Vijayanagara Empire** is referred to as the ***Pitamaha*** (the father or grandfather) of **Carnatic music** as he formulated the basic lessons in teaching Carnatic music, and is remembered for his significant contribution to **Carnatic music** [61].

As far as Tamil Nadu state is concerned, the contemporary singers **Tyagaraja** (1767–1847), **Muthuswami Dikshitar,** (1776–1835) and **Syama Sastri**, (1762–1827) who were born in different **Telugu Brahmin Families** in **Tamil speaking country** are regarded as the **Trinity of Carnatic music**. The **'Musical Trinity'** [62] infused a combination of knowledge, spirituality, and deep love for traditional musicianship with the addition of several innovations.

From the above, it is crystal clear that the **Tamil Brahmins** are as much a part of **Tamil Culture** as like other **Tamils**. Since ancient time, due to their up-bringing and education, they introduced **Vedic influence** including **Sanskrit language** in **Tamil literature and arts**. They were employed by the **Tamil kings** as priests, teachers, ministers, commanders; the principal advisers etc. and during the British rule, they served as the able administrators and accountants. Brahmins played a significant role in the **Bhakti movement** in Tamil Nadu, both as participants and as influential cum saintly figures. They made substantial contributions in every aspect of **Tamil Culture** including spiritual, cuisine, language, arts, politics and scientific research.

Final Comments:

Unlike the **Muslim invaders** and the **European traders who became Rulers** later on, directly or indirectly facilitated the growth of **Islamic** and **Christian faiths** respectively in **India,** there is no historical evidence to indicate that **any North Indian King** attacked the **South India specifically** to enforce the **Sanatana Dharma** upon the **native people of the region.** Hence it can be safely concluded that the **acceptance of Sanatana Faith** (applicable to **Buddhism and Jainism too**) by the **people of Southern States of India** is through the **debate, discussion and persuasion** of the **Ruling Class** without whose permission it would have been **next to impossible** to propagate the new ideology in the **unfamiliar region**.

Based on the above study, it can be said that since beginning, various "Sanatana Elements" slowly but steadily, got percolated into the Tamil Society and then they became the integral part of the "Tamil Culture". In true sense, "Sanatana Elements" have become inseparable from the present-day "Tamil Culture" and same thing has been explained in the form of different "Ms" described below.

Mythology: Presence of **legendary** and **epical characters** in the **Early Tamil Literature.**

Material Culture: Depiction of the **Puranic tales** in the form of magnificent **Rock-cut** and **Stone Temples**; and shaping the **Idols of Hindu Deities** in **metals**, but in the distinct **South Indian styles.**

Medium of Instructions: Use of Sanskrit language to inscribe the messages on the stones, Coins and copper plates; its application in the **Royal Courts**; in rituals/ceremonies and the medium of communication with other kingdoms, especially with the **North Indian Rulers**.

Music and Dance: Composition Carnatic music to praise the Sanatana Deities and the development of **Bharatanatyam dance based on Bharatamuni's Natya-shastra.**

Men: Brahmins as the fashioners, preservers and presenters of the **"Tamil Culture".**

When the oldest literature composed in ancient Tamil such as "Sangam Literature, Tolkappiyam etc." do contain several Sanskrit words, many references of Vedic/ Puranic Deities and the names of characters mentioned in the ancient epics Ramayana and Mahabharata; and the subsequent depiction of many "Sanatana Aspects" in the form of *special but permanent artistic features* such as the idols made in metal and stones (sculptures) and great structures (grand temples), whose basic concepts are derived from the Shilp-shastra/Agamas, dances based on *Natya-shastra* etc. including the inscriptions written in *Sanskrit* but that are created mostly during the medieval period; then the basic question here is; how come the "Culture of Tamil People" is entirely different from the rest of India and has nothing to do with the "North Indian Culture" ? (Without the influence of Aryas?)

As far as the region of development of **Sanskrit** and **Tamil** language is concerned, both languages evolved at different locations in different period of time and that cannot be specified as there is no concrete literal or archaeological evidence about the same. Also both have different vocabulary and the structure/grammar of speech. However, from "**the total cultural development point of view"**, as both share several common features between them such as philosophy, mythology then there has to be continuous interaction among the people who earlier lived separately, but came closer to each other at some point of time.

This is because, in those days, knowledge/information used to get disseminated through the **personal contacts only**. When the **ancient Tamil Literature** contains several **Sanatana Features**, then the people from **North India** must have arrived in the **South India,** a long before the composition of the **earliest known Tamil Literature**.

Existence of not only the **Sanskrit words**, but also the **names of Vedic Deities** in the **Sangam Poems** that were composed by the **Poets belonging to different strata** of the **ancient Tamil society** including **women** over a very long period does prove beyond doubt that there was a **systematic transfer of Vedic information generated by the North Indian Aryas** means the **Brahmins** to the **different classes of people of Tamilakam** well before the start of composition. It is said that **Sangam Poets** (the persons who had flair for composing poetry) did not live at one place, actually resided at **different locations** of the **Tamil Country**, but assembled together in **Madurai** with the sole purpose to share their poems with others. It means to say that, at that time, **earlier itself**, they had proper understanding of the **Vedic Philosophy**.

This can happen only when the **Vedic Brahmins** arrived in **Tamilakam** a long back in one or more waves would have taught the same to the native **Tamil Speaking People**.

The most striking observation here is that, the **Sangam Poets** did belong to different profession/class and only a few of them are believed to be **Brahmins (**e.g. Poet **Kapilar)**. As the poets of a particular generation used to gather in **Madurai** to present their poems, then it becomes crystal clear that, at that time, there was **no caste-based** or **gender-based discrimination of a person** and "**no untouchability"** in the **ancient Tamil Society**.

Strictly speaking, the **Culture** of any region or society is not the thing that is perceived and presented by the **present-day Political Class** of that region, but it is the **summary of several events** those took place in the past. When **studied in totality**, then only one can understand how the **Culture** has taken present form after **experiencing many ups and downs** during the olden days. It is to be borne in mind that, **every cultural development**, whether it is related to a **language** or **literature** or **material** or **social** or **political** field does not occur in an isolation, but it manifests the interaction of the people of one region with other, over a very long period.

Therefore, the **overall Cultural Progress** made by **Tamil Speaking Peopl**e in the last **two thousand years** in the various fields is the indicator of the **great Tamil warriors** or **leaders** who lived in the **old Tamil Land**; gave **patronage to the creative thoughts**; made **collaborative efforts to bring unity among the people belonging to different classes; encouraged the innovative craftsmanship** among the budding artists, but also maintained constant interaction with the **generations of North Indian People specifically the Brahmins/the original Aryas** as it is they, who were instrumental in spreading the **Vedic Philosophy in the South** (with the permission of the Tamil Kings).

Poems composed by the **Common People** during the **Sangam period** served as the **medium of expression** of the **new thoughts** through the **wordy Compositions**.

It is undeniable fact that since ancient time, the **warrior class people** who ruled the **Tamil kingdoms** of that time **liked the Vedic Philosophy** and accepted it as **the way of life**.

Tamil kings from different dynasties indeed invited the **Brahmins** from adjoining countries to reside permanently in their kingdoms and for that purpose, they gifted lands to the **Brahmins** to settle down and to make their stay comfortable to live happily there.

Sangama literature served the base for the fashioning of **Bhakti Movement** in **Tamilakam**.

Sculptures reflect the medium of expression of the innovative ideas through a creation mode.

Plurality of faith is the distinctivity of the **Indian Civilization** and the different **Kings of the Tamil land** have definitely followed the same with the **letter and spirit.**

After 14 century CE, **none of the original Tamil Chieftains** rose to the occasion to negate the onslaught of the Army of Delhi Sultanate and hence **failed to defend their Culture**.

Present-day Tamil generation must be grateful to the **Nayakas of Tanjavur** and **Madurai** for restoring their faith in **'Sanatana Doctrine',** otherwise **Muslim Rulers** would have compelled them to accept ***Islam*.** This is because, the **local Tamil chieftains** did not offer a **strong resistance to the Islamic invaders** who subsequently established ***Madurai Sultanate*** in the southern part of **Tamilakam.** Please remember that the **Telugu speaking leaders** who thrashed the **Madurai Sultanate** were originally from the **Vijayanagara kingdom.**

In the last 75 years, **many Tamil Politicians** have made every attempt to erase the influence of ***Sanatana*** or ***Vedic Ideology*** from the **history of Tamil Nadu** and some of them specifically targeted **Sanskrit language** as they firmly believed that it is the **language of the *Aryas*** who came to **India from outside**. During the **British rule,** the Indians were repeatedly told that the ***Aryas* were the intruders** who arrived in **Indian Sub-continent** with their **material culture** and **language,** and then composed **Vedas here.**

Strictly speaking, the current **Tamil Politicians** link their anger with their social, political and cultural awareness, and that is why they try to justify the **politics of hate** as it has become an art to divert the attention of a common person from the real issues daily encountered by an ordinary man and to win the vote in election.

At present, the **Government of Tamil Nadu** regularly uses **English** as the language for the official communication with the Central Government and Other States of India. But the fact is that **English** is also part of the **Indo-Aryan Group of Languages**. It is not known whether presence of the **Sanskrit** words like "**Jungle, Guru, Pundit, Karma, Cheetah, Avatar, Loot etc.**" or the newly derived technical term such as "**Navigation**" in **English**, really irritates the **modern-day Tamil Politicians** or the **hard-core Tamilians**.

The first law of Thermodynamics is also interpreted as **"when one form of energy disappears, then other takes it appearance**" (also known as the **Law of Nature**). Practically speaking, **Sanskrit** is one of the **most hated languages** of the **Tamil Politicians**, (modern day

Hindi as well) as they consider it as the **dead language**, but they love modern **English** very much. As a matter of fact, like **Sanskri**t language, **English** also belongs to **Indo-European /Indo-Aryans Family of the Languages**. In other words, as **Sanskrit** language has lost its charm and importance, but the foreign origin/imported **English** has taken its place.

It would be interesting to know whether the **present-day Tamil Population** (including the Politicians, Linguists, and Tamil Historians /Archaeologists) **"disrespect"** and then **"disown"** the **all-round development** that took place in the **"Tamil Culture"** during the **era of the kings** of **Pallava**, **Chola** and **Pandya Clans**; and then **"discard"** the same completely. This is because, it is these **medieval Rulers** who purposely incorporated **Sanskrit** language for the inscriptions at many places, invited more and more **Brahmins** to settle in the **Tamil Land**, personally got performed the **Vedic rituals** such as **Yajna** and promoted the **key stories of Hindu Legends** in the form of construction of the magnificent Rock-cut and Free-standing stone temples all over the Tamil Nadu State. In this way, they **constantly encouraged the *Sanatana Ideology*** in the **old Tamilakam**.

In true sense, since ancient time, **Tamil culture** has shown a tremendous capacity to absorb Vedic, Jain and Buddhist traditions and **still maintained its distinctive nature**.

Frankly speaking, the **lack of ethos and spirit among the local Tamil chieftains definitely led to pessimistic state of the Tamilakam during 14 to 18 centuries CE.**

As it is said that the **Britishers** who ruled **India** for nearly **150 years**, meticulously followed the **Divide and Rule** policy to govern the Indians who had no unity due to their diverse local cultures. Similarly, for the sake of Vote-bank politics, the present-day politicians of India are credited to have introduced **Divide and Fool** policy all over the country.

After spending two months in India, **Mark Twain** wrote in the wonderful words:

Nothing has been left undone, either by man or nature, to make India the most extraordinary country that the sun visits on his round. Nothing seems to have been forgotten, nothing overlooked. India is the cradle of human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grandmother of tradition.

Our most valuable and most attractive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only! ------**Mark Twain** (taken from the book written by **Keshav Mutalik**, 1978)

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Please note that the above essay is based on the **information compiled** from the literature available on the **Internet /Public domain**. This involved, **on-line reading** of about 600 general articles including **Wikipedia** (topics related to Tamil history and culture); many news reports; around 100 research papers on the ancient Tamil Culture; 20 books on the subjects like History, Literature and Archaeology of the Tamil Nadu State; and viewing cum listening to more than 100 videos available on the different **You Tubes channels** on the various topics related to **2500 years old Political, Social and Cultural history of Tamil Nadu (People)**. As it is not possible to give a complete list of references here, only the primary sources of information have been mentioned.

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